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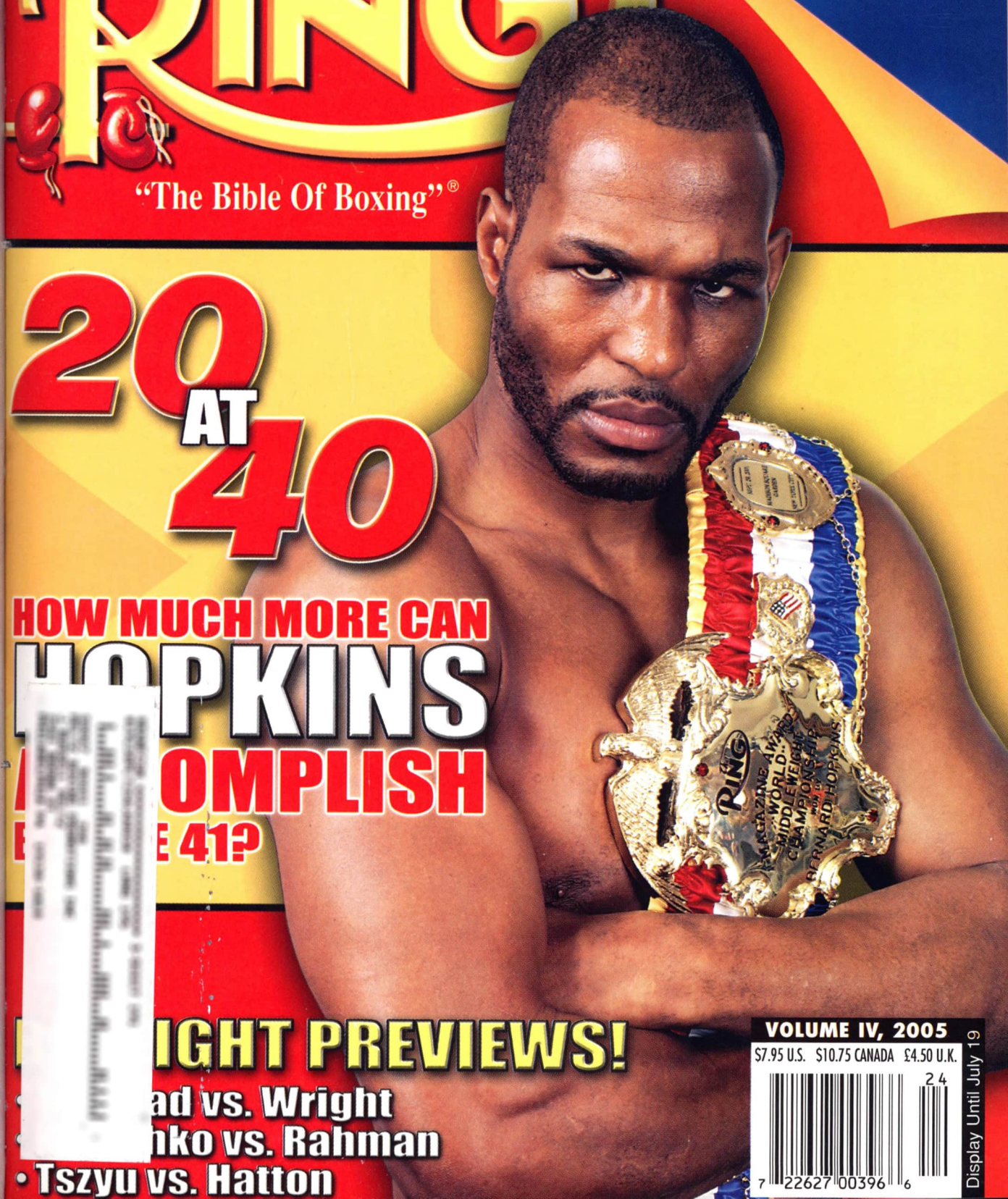

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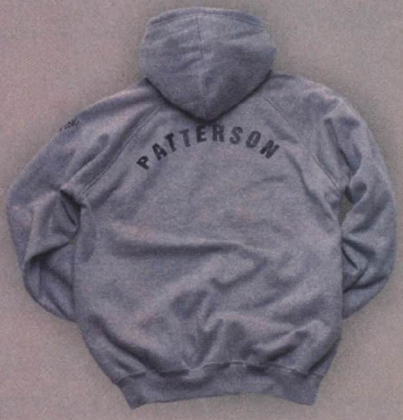

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The RING

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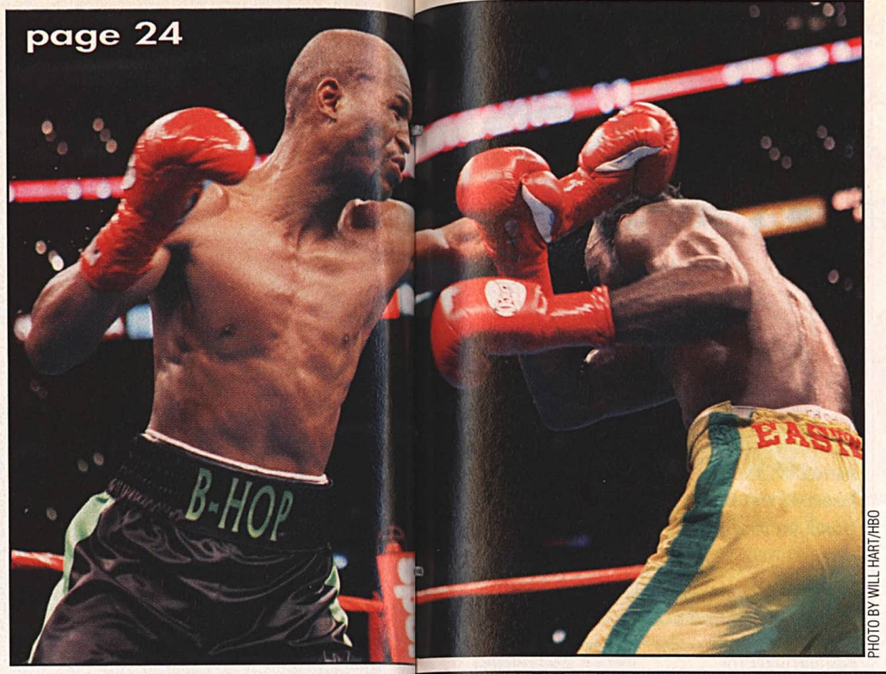

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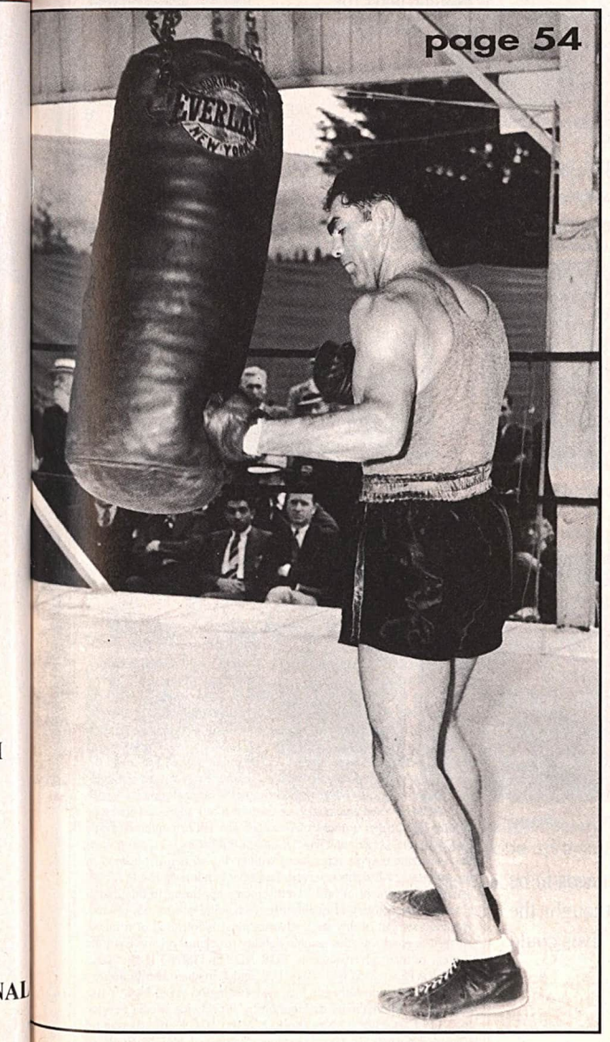

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RINGSIDE

The best and the worst of boxing were on display in the Miguel Cotto-DeMarcus "Chop Chop" Corley fight in Bayamon, Puerto Rico. On the positive side, it was an exciting, give-and-take punchout between ranked contenders, fought before an SRO crowd of passionate fans. But sadly, the fight was marred by several disturbing factors, one as old as boxing itself, the other a relatively new phenomenon.

Anybody who saw the fight knows that local referee Enrique Quinones Falu did a horrendous job. Mike Greenhill, who was ringside and covered the fight for THE RING, told me that even many Cotto fans were disturbed by the way Falu bungled the assignment.

We got a hint of Falu's incompetence in the second round when, without as much as a single warning, he penalized Cotto a point for hitting low. At first, I thought, *Okay, that was a bit severe, but at least the guy's not a homer.* Later, I would have reason to revise my opinion.

Although his transgression was more blatant, in the fourth round Corley was also docked a point for hitting low without benefit of prior warning. But by then, the entire tone of the fight had been changed, as underdog Corley had stunned Cotto in the third with a thudding right to the temple that had the local hero in serious trouble before he regained his legs later in the round.

It's no secret that Cotto was highly favored to beat Corley. In fact, the main prefight theme of the HBO broadcasting team was whether or not Cotto would become the first to stop the Washington, D.C., southpaw. But Corley fought surprisingly well, something even Cotto freely admitted, and certainly deserved a better shake than he got from Falu in the fifth round.

After getting dropped earlier in the round by a borderline bodyshot, Corley was under serious pressure and took a knee, at which point Falu suddenly waved the fight off. Three of Cotto's final four punches missed completely, while the final shot grazed Corley's shoulder. Moreover, Corley was clear-eyed and looking directly at Falu when the ref inexplicably called a halt.

While Falu's action deprived Corley of the same chance to battle back he'd given Cotto in the third, it also cheated Cotto, the paying customers, and HBO's audience of a clear-cut conclusion. But as far as I'm concerned, a more basic problem arose even before the fighters got into the ring.

According to HBO's unofficial day-of-the-fight weigh-in, Cotto, weighing 157, had a 17-pound advantage come fight time, which means a middleweight was fighting a junior welter. This was the latest example of the deeply flawed practice of the day-before-the-fight weigh-ins, which was installed in an effort to give fighters more time to re-hydrate their bodies after drying out to make weight.

This so-called safety measure is well-intentioned but ripe for abuse, and has resulted in making a total mockery of the very concept of weight classes. True, in some jurisdictions, there is a limit put on the percentage of body weight a fighter can gain after the weigh-in, but in most places this is not the case, so often one contestant (frequently the house fighter) has an unfair advantage over the other. And there's nothing safe about that.

The critical need for honest, competent referees is so obvious, no more needs to be said. But it's past time that caring people within the boxing industry rethought the day-before weigh-ins, because the very things supposedly designed to save lives could very well end up doing the opposite.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

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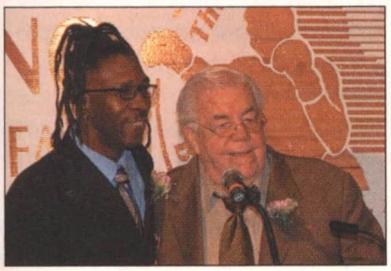


Reminiscing . . . Livingstone Bramble and Lou Duva share fight stories with Banquet crowd.

FIST CASTING

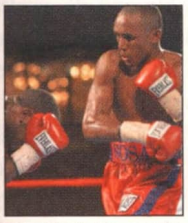
Everlasting . . . Fist cast by George Foreman.

PARADE OF CHAMPIONS

Marvelous . . . Marvin Hagler waves to fans.

Hooray . . . Grand Marshal Tony Orlando enjoys fans along Parade route.

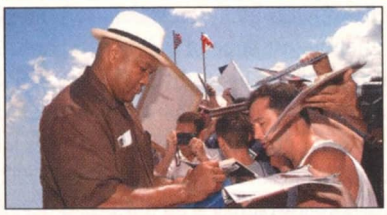
CELEBRITY BOXING NIGHT



VICTORIANO SOSA

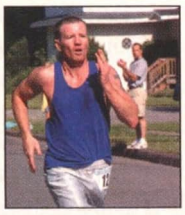
Fight Night . . . Popular boxers featured in action-packed bouts at Turning Stone Casino Resort.

MUSEUM GROUNDS



Autographs . . . George Foreman spends time signing autographs on the Museum grounds.

5K RACE, FUN RUN



Finish Line . . . "Irish" Micky Ward in stride.

Go . . . Ken Norton officially starts race of celebrity boxers and runners.

INDUCTION CEREMONY

A Moment in Time . . . Qawi, Peltz, Nelson, Zaragoza, Palomino, and Christodoulou proudly display their rings.

BOXING CARD SHOW

A Collector's Dream . . . Boxing memorabilia for fans. The world's only all-boxing show draws collectors from throughout the world.

GOLF TOURNAMENT

Chip . . . Gerry Cooney (l) chips onto 18th green while Sir Henry Cooper (r) is enroute to next tee.

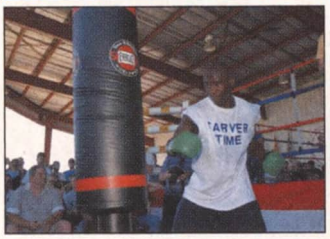
COCKTAIL PARTY

Stars . . . Boxers and fans enjoy VIP cocktail party reception.

MUSEUM

Carlos Palomino points to his boxing robe on display.

WORKOUT SESSIONS



Antonio Tarver working the heavy bag during a public workout.

RINGSIDE TALKS

Having Fun. . . Frank Bruno and Bert Sugar team up for a ringside lecture.

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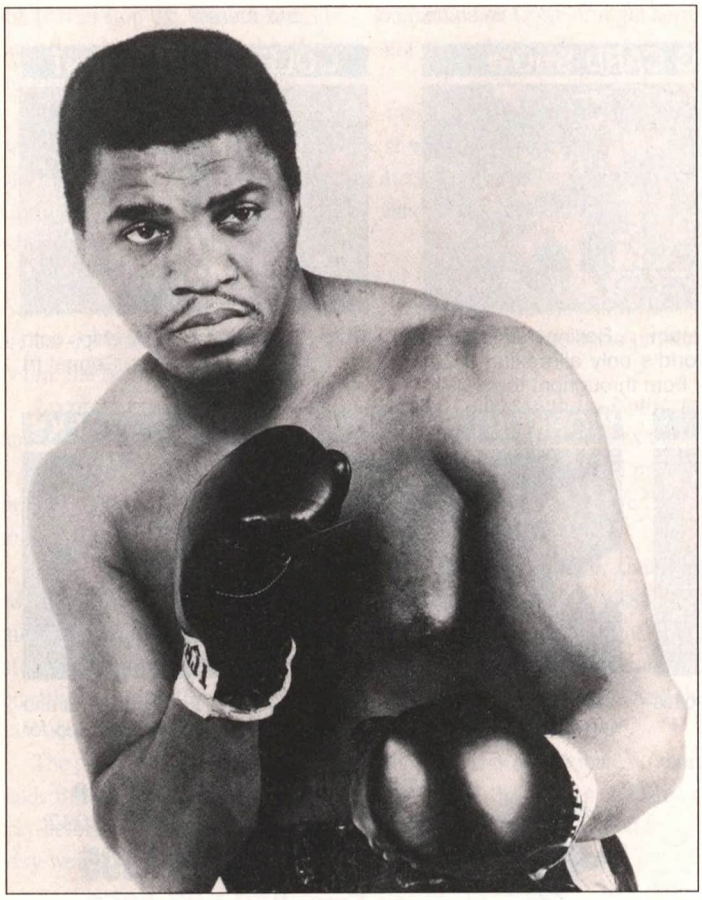
ROUND ONE

JIMMY YOUNG, 1948-2005

In Jimmy Young's second pro bout, he fought a peculiar character named Jim "Rag Daddy" Jones, who entered the ring at the Blue Horizon in Philadelphia wearing a pair of boxing trunks comprised of dozens of strips of tattered cloth. This was back in 1969 (way before guys like Hector Camacho and Jorge Paez made bizarre ring attire commonplace), and the crowd instantly adopted the eccentric out-of-towner. But not for long, as the smooth boxing Young starched Rag Daddy in the first round. It would not be the last time Young spoiled the fun by besting the fans' favorite.

At the time there were so many outstanding fighters in Philadelphia, it was easy to overlook Young, especially after he lost three of his first 10 bouts. And when they threw him in with murderous punching Earnie Shavers in his 11th start, it looked like Young's career would be over practically before it began. Shavers hit him so hard with a right hand in the third round that Young skidded across the ring on the seat of his trunks before the ropes stopped him from flying into the first row.

But Young took the loss in stride, and less than two years later he'd improved enough to hold Shavers to a 10-round draw. He followed that with a decision over Ron Lyle and, in April '76, challenged Muhammad Ali for the heavyweight title. A lot of people thought Young was robbed that night, but although he didn't get the decision, there was absolutely no doubt he made Ali look bad, which was quite an accomplishment in and of itself.



Young: Slippery heavyweight passes away at 56

Three wins later, Young tallied his most memorable victory, flooring George Foreman en route to a 12-round decision, a stunning upset that sent Foreman into retirement for the next 10 years. Beating Foreman should have made the personable Young a star, but it didn't. Maybe it was his lack of a knockout punch, maybe it was his defensive style, but after dropping a controversial decision to Ken Norton in '77, he began a slow slide into oblivion that ultimately ended with his death, due to heart failure, on February 20.

Young's cousin, former middleweight contender Bobby "Boogaloo" Watts, told the *Philadelphia Daily News* that after the Norton fight "it was like his heart went out of boxing." If that was true, Young probably should have quit, but he fought on until September 1990, going 13-12-1 with 1 no-contest in post-Norton bouts, ending up with an overall record of 35-18-3 (12) with 1 no-contest.

Although Young had been a slippery, hard-to-hit stylist in his prime, the beatings he took the second half of his career were probably responsible for his deteriorated physical condition the last few years of his life. According to Watts, drug abuse also played a role in his decline. His ring earnings long gone, Young was destitute at the end.

In the final analysis, although Young was good enough to hold his own in an era populated with some of the greatest heavyweights of all-time, like so many others before him, life outside of boxing proved tougher to handle than anybody he ever faced inside the ring.

—Nigel Collins

FIRST TO REGAIN HEAVYWEIGHT TITLE REGAINS IT AGAIN

A friend of former heavyweight champion Floyd Patterson and his family was perusing the Internet recently, when she came upon a posting on the eBay auction site for the RING belt Patterson had won when he regained the title from Ingemar Johansson at the Polo Grounds in Manhattan on June 20, 1960. Because the friend was aware that the belt had been stolen three decades earlier during a Manhattan burglary, she immediately notified Patterson's wife, who contacted the police in upstate New Paltz, New York, where the Pattersons have resided for many years.

The photo that helped secure the belt's return to its rightful owner

Because the seller was listed as a pawnshop in Manhattan's East Harlem, detectives from the NYPD's 25th Precinct were notified. They visited the store and recovered the belt from the storeowner, who said he believed it to be a replica. He also told detectives he had purchased it three years earlier from a friend who had allegedly obtained it from a homeless man.

The detectives contacted THE RING to determine if any photos were available that would help determine the authenticity of the belt. It didn't take long to find a photo of RING founder Nat Fleischer with Patterson and the belt that proved unequivocally that it was the real thing. No charges were filed against the pawnshop owner, who was cooperative throughout the investigation.

"We returned the belt to the Patterson family and they were very happy," said Detective Kevin Flynn. "They couldn't thank us enough for getting it back to them."

—Robert Mladinich

DUNDEE'S *CINDERELLA* STORY

Boxing movies and bio-pics won big at this year's Academy Awards, and in June, both genres will be rolled into one when *Cinderella Man* makes its way to the big screen. While Russell Crowe will get the great majority of the attention for his starring role as Depression-era heavyweight champ Jim Braddock, boxing fans will also recognize the man playing Braddock's cutman: Angelo Dundee, whose primary job on the film was to train Crowe and make him believable as a professional fighter.

According to Dundee, it didn't take much work.

"He's a really well-conditioned guy. He would come to the gym on a bicycle and play rugby on the weekends. He was in great shape. I just had to get him in fistic shape," Dundee said. "Russell was very adaptable. He's Braddock, believe me. He really put himself into the role. When it comes to acting, he's like five steps ahead of everybody. And he's a helluva nice human being. He treated me like family. Every minute I was with the guy was great."

The Hall of Fame trainer and the Academy Award-winning actor bonded during their month of training together in Sydney, Australia, and continued to bond in Toronto, Ontario, where the movie was shot. This wasn't Dundee's first time on a movie set—he was also a consultant on the Will Smith *Ali* picture—and like in *Ali*, a premium was placed on making sure everything about the fight scenes was realistic.

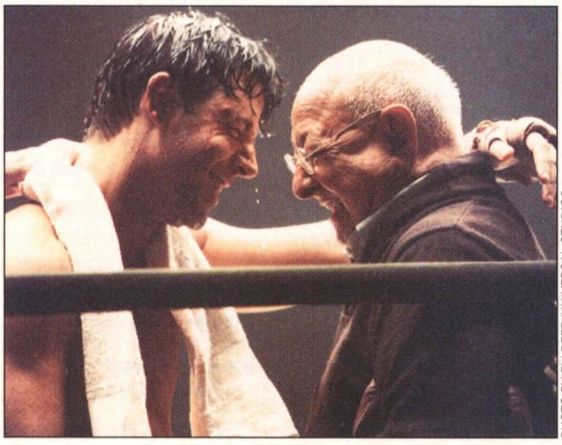


PHOTO BY ELI REED/UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

Crowe and Dundee enjoy a laugh on the set

"[Director] Ron Howard wanted everything just right, that's the way he is," Dundee said. "The boxing is so real. When I watched some of the scenes later, I felt like I was in the fight.

"But it's really a love story. The foundation is boxing, but it's a love story."

Academy-Award winner Renee Zellweger plays the love interest, Braddock's wife Mae. Another noteworthy actor in the cast is the excellent Paul Giamatti, who plays Braddock's manager, Joe Gould. Despite being 83 years old and having seen just about everything, Dundee had an almost childlike giddiness about working with these Hollywood heavyweights.

"This is a fantastic movie," Dundee said, sounding genuine despite coming from an undeniably biased perspective. "I'm so thrilled for boxing right now. First *Million Dollar Baby*, and now this. This is great for boxing."

—Eric Raskin

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
2-11-05	Andre Ward W 6 Kenny Kost	FOXSN	sm	C+	B-	B
It's never a bad thing when a prospect's chin and mettle get tested early on, as long as the prospect passes						
2-11-05	Oscar Larios W 12 Wayne McCullough	FOXSN	jf	A-	B	A
When most everything else is equal, the guy with a little more pop in his mitts usually wins						
2-11-05	Jesus Perez KO 1 Daniel Maldonado	ESPN2	jl	C-	B-	B
Don't you love it when a journeyman whips some young stud he's not supposed to last three rounds with?						
2-11-05	Laila Ali KO 8 Cassandra Geigger	ESPN2	sm	B	D+	C-
A poor woman's version of Papa Ali against Al "Blue" Lewis back in 1972						
2-11-05	Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 1 Leroy Newton	Telef	jw	C	C+	C
Until we see a birth certificate, we won't be convinced Chavez is older than eight or nine; have you seen his face?						
2-11-05	Hector Velazquez Tech. Win 6 Marcos Licona	Telef	jl	C+	B	B-
The inconclusive ending spoiled it, but this was very good for as long as it lasted and demands a rematch						
2-17-05	Jhonny Gonzalez W 12 Adonis Rivas	HBO L	b	B-	B	C
Gonzalez gets tested by tough-as-nails Rivas and passes						
2-17-05	Celestino Caballero W 12 Daniel Ponce DeLeon	HBO L	jf	B	B	C+
Come on, you didn't think he'd never lose, did you? That's not the point with this kid						
2-18-05	Ernesto Zepeda Tech. Win 9 Cesar Bazan	Telef	jw	C	B-	C
If that cut was caused by a headbutt, then Bazan's head was at the end of his arm						
2-18-05	Antonio Margarito KO 10 Sebastian Lujan	ESPN2	w	A-	C+	B
Ref: "Go back to your corner, Sebastian, we're stopping the fight"; Lujan: "What?"						
2-18-05	Shamone Alvarez KO 4 Jose Medina	Show	w	C	A-	B+
The number of flush, hard punches Medina took without flinching or backing up was truly scary						
2-18-05	Mike Arnaoutis W 12 Roberto Santa Cruz	Show	jw	C+	C+	B
Once Santa Cruz got going, this was fun, and Arnaoutis needed a difficult one						
2-19-05	Jermain Taylor KO 3 Daniel Edouard	HBO	sm	B+	B+	B
We can't say anymore that Taylor hasn't beaten any good, young middleweights; this was impressive						
2-19-05	**Bernard Hopkins W 12 Howard Eastman**	**HBO**	**World m**	**A**	**C+**	**D**
Who else liked Eastman's freaky, bleached-beard look better?						
2-25-05	Carlos Quintana KO 4 Nurhan Suleymanoglu	ESPN2	jm	C+	A-	C+
From our point of view, it's hard to root for the guy with 12 oddly mixed letters in his last name, so good for Quintana						
2-25-05	Terry Smith W 10 Fernely Feliz	ESPN2	h	C	C+	C+
Funny how frequently the guy who works harder in the ring wins						
2-25-05	Golden Johnson W 12 Freddy Hernandez	Telef	w	C-	B-	B-
If you saw this and said, "Golden Johnson is still fighting?" you're not alone						
2-25-05	Rodolfo Martinez W 8 Paulino Villalobos	Telem	b	C	C	C+
You can never trust those 23-28-2 guys to go quietly when you want them to; Martinez had to work hard for this						
2-26-05	Miguel Cotto KO 5 DeMarcus Corley	HBO	jw	B+	C+	B+
Well, we wanted to find a weakness in Cotto; "Chop Chop" revealed it						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino

NAJAI TURPIN, 1981-2005

Just when it seemed Najai "Nitro" Turpin, a gifted, slick fighter with moves reminiscent of a miniature James Toney, was ready to break through, just when it appeared he would get everything out of boxing that he wanted, it was all gone. Turpin committed suicide on February 14, three weeks before the NBC reality show *The Contender*, which starred the Philadelphia welterweight as one of 16 boxing hopefuls, was scheduled to premiere.

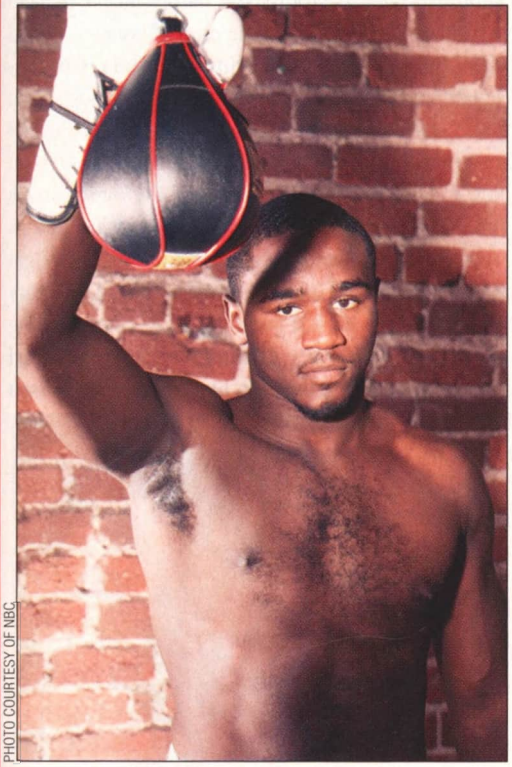


PHOTO COURTESY OF NBC

Prospect Turpin committed suicide at just 23

The news hit world-rated cruiserweight Steve Cunningham harder than any fist ever did. The same was true of Percy "Buster" Custus, Yusef Mack, Aaron and Eric Mitchell, Kassim Ouma, and anyone else who ever had anything to do with the James Shuler Memorial Gym in Southwest Philadelphia, where Turpin trained. It left them all wondering why the 23-year-old Turpin, 13-1 (9), shot himself while sitting in a parked car and whether a reported argument with his girlfriend—the mother of his two-year-old daughter—had anything to do with it.

"You never know what goes through anyone's mind," said Cunningham. "The only things that mattered to him were being the champ and spending time with his daughter. I heard he killed himself basically over his daughter, that he wanted to spend more time with her and that wasn't happening.

"He took himself away from his daughter, and I just wish he could have spoken to someone, anyone. It's really bad. He worked at the corner store and knew everyone. The kid was loved by everyone in Shuler's. When he came into the gym, I stopped and watched him; Najai was that good."

Some speculated that Turpin was depressed because he was contractually bound not to fight until *The Contender* was done airing in May, though *Contender* contestants were given a $1,500 per week stipend to cover living and training expenses until then. Friends said he put on weight and had grown more lethargic in the gym.

"I knew the kid since he was 17 years old; I'm not sure what happened, but I was shocked," said top junior middleweight Ouma, who attended Turpin's funeral in Philadelphia on February 18. "I was just speaking to him before my last fight."

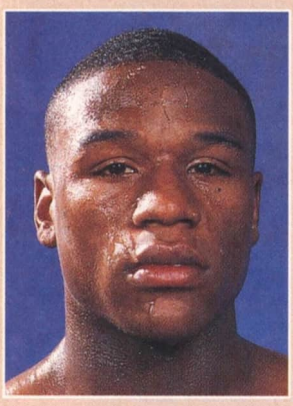
Mark Burnett, the executive producer of *The Contender*, and Sylvester Stallone and Sugar Ray Leonard, the show's co-hosts, also attended the funeral.

Turpin's death, though tragic, may have one positive effect on the fighters at Shuler's, a gym that lost another fighter last year when Tiberius Flowers was shot to death.

"We're missing two of our brothers, but this last death helped us all," Cunningham said. "It helped us get closer. Guys are more interested in everyone else. Najai used to bring his daughter to the gym. Now we bring more people to the gym and it's like a family and it's something we needed to do. It's brought us closer."

—Joe Santoliquito

OUTSIDE THE ROPES



Mayweather: Escapes jail time in Michigan

There will be no jail time for troubled **Floyd Mayweather**—at least not yet. Facing charges of misdemeanor assault in Grand Rapids, Michigan, for allegedly kicking a man in a bar, Mayweather received a suspended sentence in late-February and was placed on non-reporting probation. He was also ordered to participate in 80 hours of community service and anger management counseling, and slapped with a $500 fine and court costs. According to *The Grand Rapids Press*' **David Mayo**, Mayweather "peeled 10 bills from a fist-sized money roll," on the spot to cover those fees. The judge's decision freed Mayweather up to fight **Arturo Gatti** on June 11, but as of press time, it was unclear whether the fight would be successfully negotiated … **Paul Spadafora** wasn't quite as lucky as his fellow former lightweight titlist. He was sentenced in late-February to up to five years in prison for shooting his now-fiancee **Nadine Russo** in 2003. Still, like Mayweather, some would say "The Pittsburgh Kid" got off light, as he could be released in as little as six months … In other sentencing news, the two men convicted recently in Las Vegas for fight fixing, heavyweight fighter **Thomas Williams** and promoter **Bobby Mitchell**, received their sentences in February. Williams got a 15-month sentence, and Mitchell was given 37 months. Manager **Robert Mittleman**, who saved himself by testifying against Williams and Mitchell, remains under house arrest … We received word in mid-February that former light heavyweight contender **James Scott** has been released from prison at the age of 57. Scott was famous for taking on some of the world's best 175-pounders in the late-'70s and early-'80s in fights that took place at Rahway State Prison, where Scott was serving time for murder. He is now staying at a halfway home … We reported in the Spring 2005 issue that Hall of Famer **Alexis Arguello** had gone missing, but the three-division ex-champ has since resurfaced. Arguello said that he had simply gone on vacation to get away from some family problems, and denied rumors that he was having drinking or drug issues … Good news on another legend of the game: **Fighting Harada**, who suffered a mild brain hemorrhage in late-January, left the hospital in late-February and was making an excellent recovery … Former ESPN2 *Friday Night Fights* co-host **Max Kellerman's** show on Fox Sports Net, *I, Max*, was cancelled in mid-February after a nine-month run. The program had posted disappointing ratings and received mostly negative reviews … Longtime cruiserweight contender **Ezra Sellers** announced his retirement in mid-February at the age of 36, having lost his last two fights. The often exciting Sellers, who held kayo wins over **Johnny McClain** and **Carl Thompson** and had been defeated by the likes of **Johnny Nelson** and **Bruce Seldon**, finished with a 27-7 (24) record. All seven losses came by knockout … 1930s and '40s heavyweight contender **Bill Poland** died in early-February at the age of 87. Poland, a hard puncher and a popular fighter in New York, posted a record of 40-7-3 (29) … St. Paul, Minnesota, promoter **Tommy Brunette** suffered a heart attack at a boxing show he was running in mid-February and died later at the hospital. Brunette was 50 years old.

Poland: Popular heavyweight dies at 87

THE PUNCHLINES

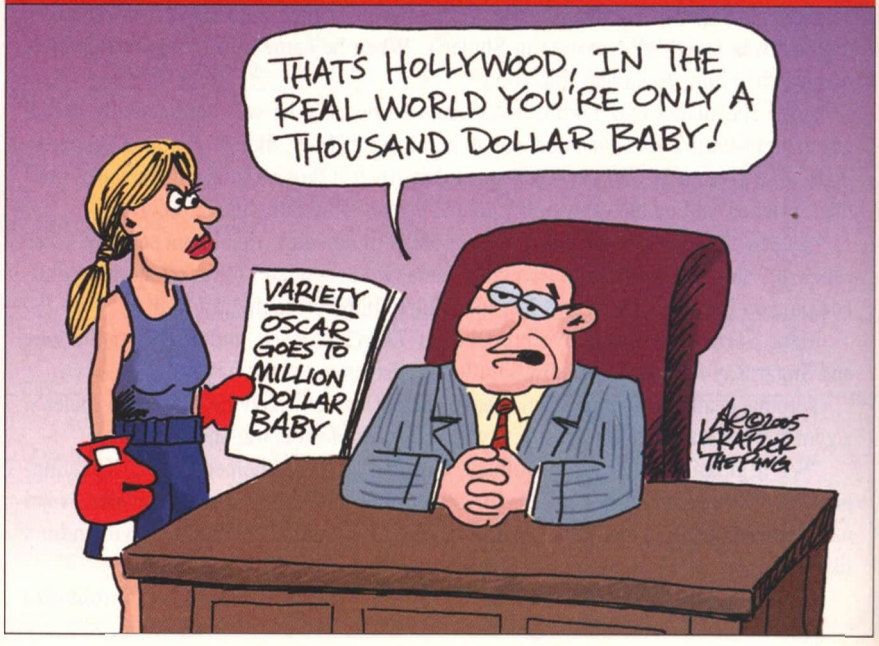
"He's a clock with no hands … ageless."

—HBO analyst Larry Merchant, on Bernard Hopkins

"It's not going to be enough for you to stand there and hand out boxing gloves. You're going to have to actively participate. If you don't, then I can tell you I don't care what ESPN fight's coming up, what Nike contract's out there, what your schedule is for training. You will do 90 days in Kent County Jail. That, I can guarantee you."

—Michigan judge Michael Christensen, to Floyd Mayweather, after ordering Mayweather to do community service

AL KRATZER'S VIEW



The RING ®
"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

RATINGS ANALYSIS

(For period ended March 2, 2005)

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
   Middleweight
2. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
   Junior Welterweight
3. **KOSTYA TSZYU**
   Junior Welterweight
4. **WINKY WRIGHT**
   Junior Middleweight
5. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
   Featherweight
6. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
   Featherweight
7. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
   Junior Lightweight
8. **ERIK MORALES**
   Junior Lightweight
9. **GLEN JOHNSON**
   Light Heavyweight
10. **ANTONIO TARVER**
    Light Heavyweight

HEAVYWEIGHTS: No changes.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: Fabrice Tiozzo improves from seventh to fifth on the strength of his kayo of Dariusz Michalczewski (fifth last issue), who exits. The reshuffling allows Paul Briggs (eighth last issue), Thomas Ulrich (ninth last issue), and Rico Hoye (10th last issue) to advance one spot each and makes room for Montell Griffin to return at number 10.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Arthur Abraham, coming off a meaningful win over Ian Gardner, replaces William Joppy at number 10.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

WELTERWEIGHTS: Sebastian Lujan (10th last issue) is gone following his TKO at the hands of number-one contender Antonio Margarito. Jose Antonio Rivera replaces Lujan in the 10th spot.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: Major shakeup as Miguel Cotto moves from fifth to fourth after his TKO of DeMarcus Corley, and Junior Witter (10th last issue) jumps to seventh thanks to his victory over Lovemore Ndou, who slides from eighth to ninth. The realignment also drops Sharmba Mitchell from fourth to fifth, Corley from seventh to eighth, and Oktay Urkal from ninth to 10th.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: No changes.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: Zahir Raheem (seventh last issue) exits, as he is no longer campaigning at 126 pounds. Raheem's departure allows Michael Brodie (eighth last issue), Chris John (ninth last issue), and Spend Abazi (10th last issue) to climb one rung each, and Nicky Cook to return at number 10.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: Salim Medjkoune (seventh last issue) is gone due to the fact he has lost two of his four most recent fights and has been inactive for nine months. Daniel Ponce De-Leon (ninth last issue) also exits after losing to Celestino Caballero, who enters at number 10. Ricardo Cordoba, who has a recent win over Caballero, is new at ninth. The shakeup also pushes up Yoddamrong Sithyodthong from eighth to seventh and Wayne McCullough from 10th to eighth.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: Julio Zarate (10th last issue) departs following a loss to Wladimir Sidorenko, who takes over Zarate's former slot.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

FLYWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Ulises Solis (ninth last issue) changes places with Kermin Guardia (eighth last issue) following Solis' victory over Jesus Martinez. Moreover, Guardia has lost his last two bouts.

STRAWWEIGHTS: Daniel Reyes tumbles from third to eighth following his loss to Omar Soto, who debuts at number seven. Reyes' decline boosts Ivan Calderon, Isaac Bustos, Eagle Kyowa, and Juan Landaeta on spot each, while Chana Porpaoin and Noel Arambulet slip one position each due to Soto's arrival. The changes also force out Rodel Mayol (10th last issue).

POUND-FOR-POUND: No changes.■

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended March 2, 2005

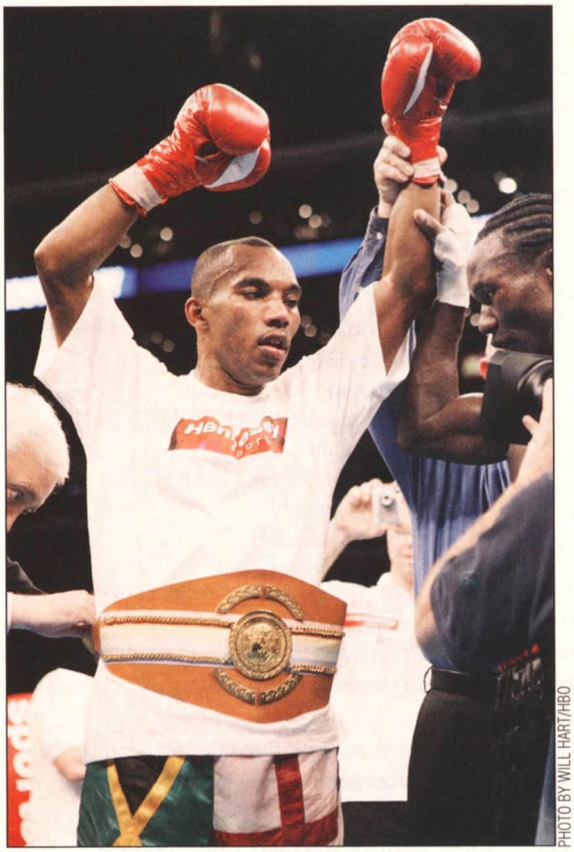


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Junior Witter climbed three spots at 140 pounds after outpointing Lovemore Ndou

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between THE RING'S number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

Ratings By The Editors

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

Champ: VITALI KLITSCHKO
Ukraine 35-2 (34)

1. **CHRIS BYRD** Flint, MI 38-2-1 (20)
2. **JOHN RUIZ** Methuen, MA 41-5-1 (28)
3. **HASIM RAHMAN** Baltimore, MD 40-5-1 (33)
4. **JAMES TONEY** Ann Arbor, MI 68-4-2 (43)
5. **MONTE BARRETT** Queens, NY 31-3 (17)
6. **ANDREW GOLOTA** Poland 38-5-1 (31)
7. **FRES OQUENDO** Puerto Rico 24-3 (15)
8. **JAMEEL McCLINE** Port Jefferson, NY 31-4-1 (19)
9. **LAMON BREWSTER** Los Angeles, CA 31-2 (27)
10. **SAMUEL PETER** Las Vegas, NV 22-0 (19)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: WINKY WRIGHT
St. Petersburg, FL 48-3 (25)

1. **KASSIM OUMA** W. Palm Beach, FL 21-1-1 (13)
2. **SHANE MOSLEY** Pomona, CA 39-4 (35)
3. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 38-9-1 (20)
4. **DANIEL SANTOS** Puerto Rico 29-2-1 (20)
5. **TRAVIS SIMMS** Norwalk, CT 24-0 (18)
6. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO** Spain 58-5 (40)
7. **RODNEY JONES** Lafayette, LA 35-3 (22)
8. **KOFI JANTUAH** Las Vegas, NV 28-2 (18)
9. **BRONCO McKART** Monroe, MI 47-6 (31)
10. **ALEJANDRO GARCIA** Mexico 28-1 (28)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: MANNY PACQUIAO
Philippines 39-2-2 (30)

1. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 43-2-1 (33)
2. **INJIN CHI** South Korea 30-2-1 (18)
3. **ROCKY JUAREZ** Houston, TX 22-0 (15)
4. **SCOTT HARRISON** Scotland 23-2-2 (13)
5. **VICTOR POLO** Colombia 34-4-3 (24)
6. **MANUEL MEDINA** Mexico 63-14 (29)
7. **MICHAEL BRODIE** England 35-2-1 (23)
8. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 34-0-1 (19)
9. **SPEND ABAZI** Denmark 31-1 (10)
10. **NICKY COOK** England 24-0 (14)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **OSCAR LARIOS** Mexico 55-3-1 (35)
2. **MAHYAR MONSHIPOUR** France 26-2-2 (17)
3. **ISRAEL VAZQUEZ** Mexico 37-3 (28)
4. **JOAN GUZMAN** Dominican Republic 22-0 (17)
5. **JOSE LUIS VALBUENA** Venezuela 24-3-1 (14)
6. **JORGE LACIERVA** Mexico 26-5-5 (18)
7. **YODDAMRONG SITHYODTHONG** Thailand 41-2-1 (18)
8. **WAYNE McCULLOUGH** Las Vegas, NV 27-5 (18)
9. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 24-0 (17)
10. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 21-2 (15)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 33-3 (30)
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 47-1-2 (33)
3. **RATANACHAI VORAPIN** Thailand 59-8 (40)
4. **GENARO GARCIA** Mexico 32-4 (20)
5. **CRUZ CARBAJAL** Mexico 24-12-1 (20)
6. **TOSHIAKI NISHIOKA** Japan 24-4-3 (14)
7. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 17-0 (15)
8. **RICARDO VARGAS** Mexico 36-10-3 (11)
9. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 27-4 (24)
10. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Germany 17-0 (6)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **WAYNE BRAITHWAITE**
   Guyana 21-0 (17)
2. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK**
   France 30-2 (21)
3. **JOHNNY NELSON**
   England 44-12-2 (29)
4. **O'NEIL BELL**
   Atlanta, GA 23-1-1 (22)
5. **KELVIN DAVIS**
   Reno, NV 21-2-1 (16)
6. **CARL THOMPSON**
   England 33-6 (25)
7. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
   Philadelphia, PA 16-0 (9)
8. **DALE BROWN**
   Canada 33-3-1 (21)
9. **VIRGIL HILL**
   Bismarck, ND 49-5 (23)
10. **PIETRO AURINO**
    Italy 31-2 (14)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: GLEN JOHNSON
Miami, FL 42-9-2 (28)

1. **ANTONIO TARVER**
   Orlando, FL 22-3 (18)
2. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
   Hungary 22-0 (13)
3. **ROY JONES**
   Pensacola, FL 49-3 (38)
4. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
   Huntington Beach, CA 37-2 (23)
5. **FABRICE TIOZZO**
   Franco 47-2 (31)
6. **CLINTON WOODS**
   England 36-3-1 (22)
7. **PAUL BRIGGS**
   Australia 23-1 (17)
8. **THOMAS ULRICH**
   Germany 27-1 (19)
9. **RICO HOYE**
   Detroit, MI 18-0 (14)
10. **MONTELL GRIFFIN**
    Chicago, IL 47-5 (30)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JOE CALZAGHE**
   Wales 38-0 (30)
2. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
   Denmark 35-0 (27)
3. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
   Australia 23-2 (18)
4. **ANTWUN ECHOLS**
   Davenport, IA 31-5-1 (27)
5. **DANNY GREEN**
   Australia 19-1 (18)
6. **JEFF LACY**
   St. Petersburg, FL 18-0 (14)
7. **MADS LARSEN**
   Denmark 45-2 (37)
8. **ROBIN REID**
   England 38-4-1 (27)
9. **MARKUS BEYER**
   Germany 31-2 (12)
10. **MANNY SIACA**
    Puerto Rico 18-5 (16)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS
Philadelphia, PA 46-2-1 (32)

1. **HOWARD EASTMAN**
   England 40-2 (35)
2. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA**
   Los Angeles, CA 37-4 (29)
3. **FELIX STURM**
   Germany 22-1 (10)
4. **FELIX TRINIDAD**
   Puerto Rico 42-1 (35)
5. **JERMAIN TAYLOR**
   Little Rock, AR 23-0 (17)
6. **ROBERT ALLEN**
   Atlanta, GA 36-5 (27)
7. **MASELINO MASOE**
   New Zealand 26-2 (25)
8. **KINGSLEY IKEKE**
   Canada 22-1 (12)
9. **SAM SOLIMAN**
   Australia 30-7 (12)
10. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
    Germany 15-0 (14)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: ZAB JUDAH
Brooklyn, NY 33-2 (24)

1. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
   Mexico 31-4 (22)
2. **CORY SPINKS**
   St. Louis, MO 34-3 (11)
3. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
   Denmark 34-0 (26)
4. **MANUEL GOMEZ**
   Mexico 27-10-1 (19)
5. **KERMIT CINTRON**
   Reading, PA 24-0 (22)
6. **JAWAID KHALIQ**
   England 23-1-1 (13)
7. **CARLOS BALDOMIR**
   Argentina 40-9-6 (12)
8. **COSME RIVERA**
   Los Angeles, CA 27-7-2 (19)
9. **DAVID ESTRADA**
   Chicago, IL 18-1 (9)
10. **JOSE ANTONIO RIVERA**
    Worcester, MA 37-3-1 (24)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: KOSTYA TSZYU
Australia 31-1 (25)

1. **ARTURO GATTI**
   Jersey City, NJ 39-6 (30)
2. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
   Brooklyn, NY 25-1-1 (17)
3. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
   Grand Rapids, MI 33-0 (22)
4. **MIGUEL COTTO**
   Puerto Rico 23-0 (19)
5. **SHARMBA MITCHELL**
   Washington, D.C. 55-4 (31)
6. **RICKY HATTON**
   England 38-0 (28)
7. **JUNIOR WITTER**
   England 31-1-2 (19)
8. **DeMARCUS CORLEY**
   Washington, D.C. 29-4-1 (16)
9. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
   Australia 39-8-1 (25)
10. **OKTAY URKAL**
    Germany 34-3 (10)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JOSE LUIS CASTILLO
Mexico 51-6-1 (45)

1. **DIEGO CORRALES**
   Las Vegas, NV 39-2 (32)
2. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
   Miami, FL 31-3 (19)
3. **JUAN LAZCANO**
   El Paso, TX 33-3-1 (25)
4. **JULIO DIAZ**
   Coachella, CA 30-2 (22)
5. **JUAN DIAZ**
   Houston, TX 27-0 (13)
6. **ACELINO FREITAS**
   Brazil 36-1 (31)
7. **JAVIER JAUREGUI**
   Mexico 49-11-2 (34)
8. **ARTUR GRIGORIAN**
   Uzbekistan 37-1 (23)
9. **JULIEN LORCY**
   France 56-4-2 (41)
10. **LAKVA SIM**
    Mongolia 19-4-1 (16)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA**
   Mexico 59-4 (41)
2. **ERIK MORALES**
   Mexico 47-2 (34)
3. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
   Mexico 40-3 (28)
4. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
   Thailand 43-2-1 (35)
5. **CARLOS HERNANDEZ**
   Bellflower, CA 41-4-1 (24)
6. **JORGE BARRIOS**
   Argentina 42-2-1 (30)
7. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
   South Africa 30-1 (16)
8. **MIKE ANCHONDO**
   La Puente, CA 25-0 (18)
9. **ROBBIE PEDEN**
   Australia 25-2 (14)
10. **MZONKE FANA**
    South Africa 22-2 (8)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA**
   Japan 28-3 (18)
2. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
   Mexico 27-1 (16)
3. **LUIS PEREZ**
   Nicaragua 22-1 (14)
4. **IVAN HERNANDEZ**
   Mexico 19-0-1 (13)
5. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
   Venezuela 25-1 (24)
6. **MARK JOHNSON**
   Washington, D.C. 44-4 (28)
7. **JOSE NAVARRO**
   Los Angeles, CA 21-1 (9)
8. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
   North Korea 30-3-1 (8)
9. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
   Mexico 29-1-1 (23)
10. **ERIC MOREL**
    Madison, WI 35-1 (18)

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
   Thailand 55-2 (29)
2. **LORENZO PARRA**
   Venezuela 25-0 (17)
3. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
   Australia 22-0 (17)
4. **MZUKISI SIKALI**
   South Africa 29-4-2 (17)
5. **IRENE PACHECO**
   Colombia 29-1 (22)
6. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
   Argentina 18-0-2 (12)
7. **ROSENDO ALVAREZ**
   Nicaragua 34-2-2 (22)
8. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
   France 17-0 (6)
9. **HUSSEIN HUSSEIN**
   Australia 27-1 (21)
10. **BRIAN VILORIA**
    Waipahu, HI 16-0 (10)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JORGE ARCE**
   Mexico 38-3-1 (28)
2. **VICTOR BURGOS**
   Mexico 37-13-3 (22)
3. **BEIBIS MENDOZA**
   Colombia 29-3 (23)
4. **NELSON DIEPPA**
   Puerto Rico 22-1-2 (13)
5. **PICHIT SIRIWAT**
   Thailand 30-2 (14)
6. **FAHLAN SAKKREERIN**
   Thailand 50-4-2 (20)
7. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
   Mexico 33-2-1 (20)
8. **ULISES SOLIS**
   Mexico 15-1 (11)
9. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
   Colombia 35-4 (21)
10. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
    Panama 18-1 (15)

STRAWWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **YUTAKA NIDA**
   Japan 17-1-3 (8)
2. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
   Indonesia 49-7-3 (21)
3. **IVAN CALDERON**
   Puerto Rico 21-0 (4)
4. **ISAAC BUSTOS**
   Mexico 24-6-3 (13)
5. **EAGLE KYOWA**
   Japan 13-1 (5)
6. **JUAN LANDAETA**
   Venezuela 15-3-1 (13)
7. **OMAR SOTO**
   Mexico 14-2-1 (10)
8. **DANIEL REYES**
   Colombia 34-3-1 (29)
9. **CHANA PORPAOIN**
   Thailand 51-2-3 (17)
10. **NOEL ARAMBULET**
    Venezuela 20-3-1 (10)

RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

GILD BY ASSOCIATION

In the eyes of the general public, boxing is a lot like the teenager with glasses, zits, and more oil in his hair than the Exxon Valdez spilled into Prince William Sound. Nobody considers the kid good-looking, and the only chance he has of emerging from the pack in a positive light is if the pack consists of a bunch of kids who are bigger losers than he is.

Well, these days, boxing's peer group is such a sorry bunch of delinquents that the stumbling, stammering, usually clueless fight game has a pretty good chance of getting voted prom king, for goodness sake. Have you taken a good long look at the wide world of sports lately? Sampled the human drama of athletic competition? Studied what passes for the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat? If so, do you still have an appetite?

While football hasn't done anything to disgrace itself as of late, the same can't be said of the other three "major" sports. In fact, the suits in charge of the NBA, the NHL, and Major League Baseball might be the bravest guys this side of Arturo Gatti simply because they've had the courage to avoid permanently altering their appearances with plastic surgery and fleeing to the islands of Micronesia to live out their days in seclusion.

Let's start with the NBA, which recently had one of its national telecasts draw a lower rating than televised poker and couldn't polish its image anytime soon if it had a small army standing by

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

"My sport's in better shape than yours, Barry"

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Incredibly, Golota has more self-control than a lot of NBA players

with cans of paste wax and buffing cloths. Earlier this season, a Detroit Pistons fan at The Palace of Auburn Hills tossed a beer on the Indiana Pacers' Ron Artest, and the wannabe WBA heavyweight contender (yes, Artest says he has aspirations of punching for pay one day) ran into the stands and ignited a melee. When the beverages, punches, chairs, and bodies had stopped sailing through the air, Artest had been suspended for the rest of the season and the NBA was discussing the feasibility of separating its players and spectators with Plexiglas barricades.

(When Artest later appeared on *Today* to discuss the incident, he displayed about as much contrition as he did common sense, using the occasion to plug his new rap album.)

The good news is that basketball at least had a season to take away from Artest. Hockey wasn't so lucky. The NHL never did play a game in 2004-'05, choosing to cancel its entire schedule on February 16 after the players union and the owners couldn't reach an agreement on the issue of a salary cap. Union and management never did understand each other, but throughout the lengthy labor dispute, one message came through loud and clear to the fans: Nobody gives a puck about you.

Baseball, on the other hand, cares deeply about its fan base. That's why, for years, it chose to ignore obvious signs of steroid abuse by its players, just so long as the crowds were being entertained by 500-foot moon shots and one home run record after another getting obliterated. In February, former superstar Jose Canseco appeared on *60 Minutes* to admit that he used steroids and helped other players shoot them, too, among them everybody's hero, Mark McGwire. (Buy me some peanuts and Cracker Jack, I don't care if the right fielder is the size of a skyscraper and has acne on his back.)

Forgive some of us who still retain a great deal of admiration for the Sweet Science and are thus smirking (all right, actually laughing hysterically) at the misfortune that has befallen these other sports. Far be it from me to take joy in someone else's misery, but the truth is that those of us who follow boxing have grown tired through the years of having to constantly defend the game, being made to feel as though we're some sort of weird cult engaged in an underground pursuit, and reading baseball stories by writers who think they're poets and that a bunt down the third baseline is a religious experience.

Say what you want about boxing, but when is the last time so many of its records were under suspicion because of performance-enhancing drugs? Do we have to question how many of Bernard Hopkins' middleweight title defenses were the result of his gym work and strategy and how many he owes to the syringe? How many fighters have made the kind of eye-popping physical transformation Barry Bonds has through the years? Do we see anyone using corked gloves to make their punches more effective?

Fighters and promoters are constantly feuding, and one can certainly make a case that the capping of purses would be good for the overall health of boxing. But has greed ever consumed labor and management to the extent that it creates a work stoppage denying fans a year's worth of action? Could you imagine Don King or Bob Arum, on their worst day, agreeing to shut down the sport?

Or could you envision a bunch of guys in trunks and gloves racing into the stands to battle with the people who bought tickets to see them? Sure, there have been riots at fight cards, some pretty ugly ones, as a matter of fact. None, of them, however, featured big, strong, nasty professional athletes jumping over seats and beating on spectators.

Fighters are often subject to some hefty abuse, from verbal taunts to getting hit with flying liquids. (Remember Andrew Golota getting pasted with every item on the concession stand menu following his disgraceful encounter with Mike Tyson in 2000?) And, yet, they don't retaliate. Artest objected to a *beer* bath. How would he have liked to walk down the aisle in L.A.'s Olympic Auditorium on one of the many evenings that cups of urine sailed toward a fighter the crowd didn't like?

Oh, to be NBA Commissioner David Stern, MLB Commissioner Bud Selig, or NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman. Suddenly, the jobs of Tyson's financial planner, Paul Spadafora's lawyer, and Danny Williams' nutritionist don't seem so bad.

Before boxing pumps up its chest like Jason Giambi on human growth hormone, though, let's remember that it hasn't done anything to command positive headlines in a while. The fight game has elevated its status recently in the same manner of a mediocre contender who doesn't do anything particularly impressive but nonetheless moves up in the ratings because the guys ahead of him either lost or looked terrible while winning. Nonetheless, we'll take it. Especially in light of all the abuse boxing has had to endure through the years, often for doing nothing wrong except being boxing.

The Malice of Auburn Hills. Hardball cheaters being outed. The Stanley Cup collecting dust. This is your chance, fighters. Take delight in all of it. Just because your noses are flattened a bit doesn't mean you can't look down them. ■

DIGGING DEEP

By Ivan Goldman

TAYLOR CURED OF HOPKINS AVOIDANCE

It's a miracle. Middleweight contender Jermain Taylor and his savvy promoter Lou DiBella are over their extended bout with H.A.S., also known as Hopkins Avoidance Syndrome. Previously, whenever someone asked them when they might challenge the undisputed middleweight champion, Taylor and DiBella, tragically suffering from their merciless speech ailment, were unable to answer a direct question with a direct answer.

But after his third-round stoppage of Daniel Edouard on the undercard of Bernard Hopkins-Howard Eastman, the undefeated Taylor managed to get the words out at last: "I believe I'm ready for [Hopkins]."

I was on the scene only last year when Taylor stopped Raul Marquez in Carson, California. Afterward, someone asked him whether he was ready for Hopkins. "I feel like I'm learning," answered Taylor, who was then two months shy of 26. Taylor, a hard-working, affable young man with no discernible bad habits, is just about impossible to dislike. But for years his handlers implied he was only a kid, so give him a break. Fact is, this "kid" will be 27 in August.

It's fitting to compare Taylor's cautious career to that of Hopkins' business partner in Golden Boy Promotions, Oscar De La Hoya. De La Hoya, who, like Taylor, burst into the pro ranks with an Olympic medal, was subjected practically right out of the box to complaints from commentators and fans who contended he was moving along too slowly. Yet *before* his 26th birthday, De La Hoya had already won the WBC super lightweight title from Julio Cesar Chavez and the WBC welterweight title from Pernell Whitaker. Granted, many ringsiders thought Whitaker got shafted. But there's no denying De La Hoya accepted the fight. When he was barely 26, Oscar risked his title against the deadly Felix Trinidad, losing it in a most disputable decision. Also at 26, Oscar took a close one from devastating puncher Ike Quartey, beating him almost senseless in the 12th round. None of this was child's play.

You have to wonder whether Taylor and DiBella waited to untwist their tongues until Taylor got more experience or Hopkins, now 40, grew old enough to meet their vulnerability standards. Taylor might be ready for Hopkins the way the Titanic was ready for that iceberg. But there's only one way to find out.

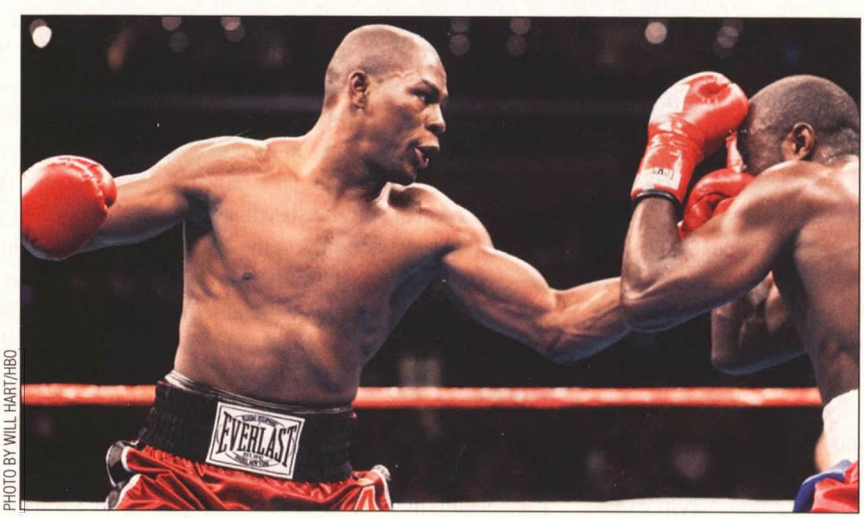


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Is Taylor ready for Hopkins?

OSCAR PUNISHED AGAIN: Oscar's self-confidence may have taken a turn for the worse at the Hopkins-Eastman postfight press conference. De La Hoya was sitting on the podium in his role as promoter when somebody asked Hopkins who was a tougher opponent—Oscar or Eastman. Without skipping a beat, the candid "Executioner" replied, "The

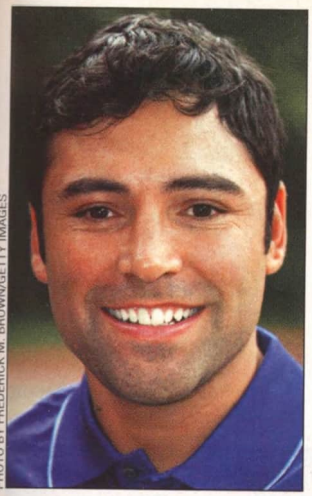


PHOTO BY FREDERICK M. BROWN/GETTY IMAGES

Oscar seems to be going in several different directions at the same time

bigger man. Oscar is not a middleweight. Eastman is framed like a light heavyweight."

Yes, Oscar was no great shakes at 160, but dismissing his efforts so casually while the poor man sat there emotionally naked was about as diplomatic as a poison-tipped arrow. On the other hand, Hopkins' candor is part of what's so refreshing about him.

OSCAR MIXED UP: Even as De La Hoya announced he was going back down to welter, he dispatched his consigliere, Richard Schaeffer, to Team Trinidad to sniff out possible rematches with Hopkins and De La Hoya. Trinidad-De La Hoya would be a huge, star-crossed event, especially with De La Hoya, 32, now claiming the bout would be his last. But Trinidad is a middleweight. How does such a contest square with Oscar's welterweight plans? These are what you call mutually exclusive ideas. It's like telling everyone you're working to protect the environment while you drive around in a Hummer and throw beer cans out the window.

OSCAR'S LOOT: Roy Englebrecht, formerly of Golden Boy Promotions, is flying solo again, doing his own little shows in Irvine, California, and elsewhere. He and Oscar still have some kind of financial connections, but they appear threadbare. Someone had to go. Golden Boy sported too many guys wearing snappy suits—a good indicator overhead was headed into the red zone. With its opulent downtown L.A. address, the company is nestled in a neighborhood mostly reserved for quietly powerful puppeteers in international banking, accountancy, and law. Even Dan Goossen, a steadfast believer in designer shoes, limos, and five-star hotels, established digs for his Goossen-Tutor Promotions in L.A.'s more modest San Fernando Valley.

But Oscar has an excellent excuse for his fancy location. He now owns the 120-unit building, it was revealed by the *L.A. Times*' Steve Springer. Plans were underway to rename the 12-story edifice The Golden Boy Building and erect—no kidding—a statue of Oscar in the lobby.

Oscar heads a group of investors whose other holdings include Spanish-language newspapers in L.A., Chicago, and New York and an office building on New York's Madison Avenue. In the planning stage is a chain of self-storage units to be named—how did you guess?—Golden Boy Storage.

It seems like only yesterday when Oscar broke into the pro ranks and all he sought from his managers was a measly million dollars and a Chevy van.

TIGHT-FISTED MICE: ESPN, which changed its mind and continues to support boxing after all, is now one of the most profitable enterprises inside the Disney Corporation. The entire Mouse-opoly made $723-million in its last fiscal quarter, more than Wall Street expected and five percent above its earnings a year previously. Ad revenues at ESPN and ESPN2, its boxing home, were up more than 10 percent while profits at Disney's ABC, which basically abandoned boxing shows years ago, suffered. Perhaps someone at the top will see a connection there.

I get a lump in my throat when I think about how carefully those bejeweled Disney executives in their monogrammed shirts and mouse-ear caps watch over the welfare of their stockholders. Yet while they were pinching pennies on fight cards, they paid Michael Ovitz, just one of Disney's many vice presidents, $140-million in severance pay when he left after only 15 months on the job.

Thanks to a lawsuit filed by shareholders, the world got a good look at those top-secret ledgers buried under Pluto's doghouse. Ovitz, during his short tenure, romped through cash the way Imelda Marcos shops for shoes. He burned up $4.8-million in expenses, including $2.1-million just to decorate his office. Had they allocated just a fraction of the Ovitz money to boxing, Disney's chief mousketeers could have hosted the most glorious cards in the hemisphere. Heck, they could have *owned* boxing.

ZAB UP, FLOYD DOWN: Zab Judah, the trash-talking, showboating Brooklyn prodigy, appears to have grown up in time to save his career and take care of business. He sure took care of Cory Spinks in their second fight. He behaved like a gentleman before, during, and after the contest. No effort to humiliate his opponent, no chair throwing or referee choking.

His beautiful offensive and defensive moves flowed together exquisitely. About round four or so, partly because he was carrying the fight to Spinks, I actually found myself rooting for Zab. In round nine, when he showed concern for his now-defenseless opponent, Judah had me. I can't wait to see him fight again. Help, I'm beginning to sound like Max Kellerman.

But alas, while Judah, THE RING's new welterweight champion, appears to have developed character at last, another boxing prodigy, junior welter Floyd Mayweather, continued his personal downward spiral. As I wrote this, braggart, whiner, and documented serial-woman-beater Mayweather had just gotten off with community service after pleading no contest to kicking a bouncer in a joint in Grand Rapids, Michigan. And he wonders why he can't get an athletic shoe named after him. ■

PHOTO BY ELSA/GETTY IMAGES

Goldman likes Judah's new attitude

CAMERA CLICKS

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Anybody else suddenly feeling thirsty for a Budweiser? Round-card girls Sharon and Maite dressed appropriately for a night of work in the Puerto Rican heat, wearing skimpy outfits, but still finding room for the Bud logo. If they need anyone to test whether those beer logos get as slippery as the ones on the ring floor, we'll be glad to volunteer.

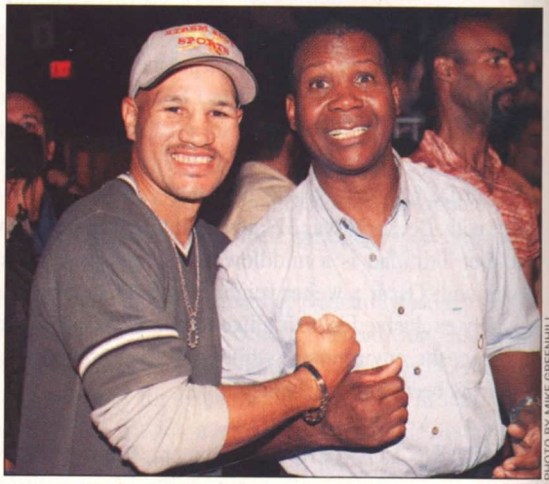


PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

You may not quite be able to call them two of Puerto Rico's all-time greats, but they're at least two of the island nation's all-time goods: Retired former 130-pound titleholders John-John Molina and Alfredo Escalera met up at the Miguel Cotto-DeMarcus Corley fight in Bayamon ... and saw Cotto look a heckuva lot more like an all-time good than an all-time great.

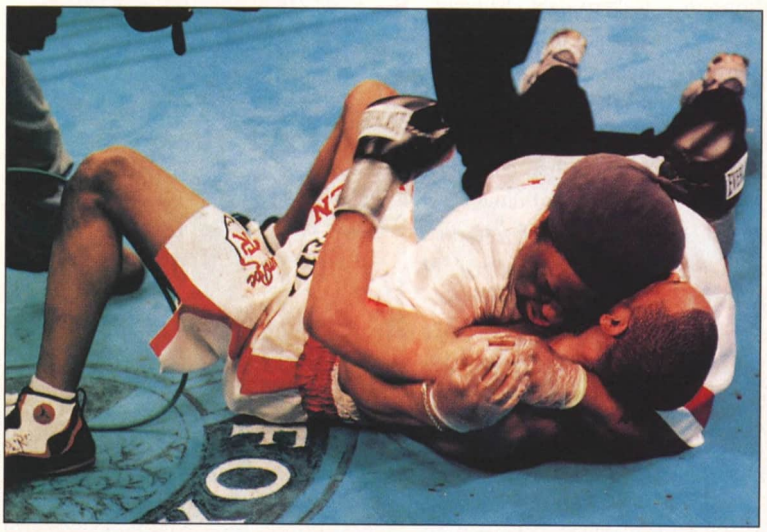


PHOTO BY GREGG MARNANE

We've all heard of crushing defeats, but as shown here by Kendall Holt and his over-excited trainer, Raz Gist, there can be crushing victories as well. This was Holt and Gist's way of celebrating the junior welterweight's February victory over previously unbeaten David Diaz, which came via eighth-round stoppage.

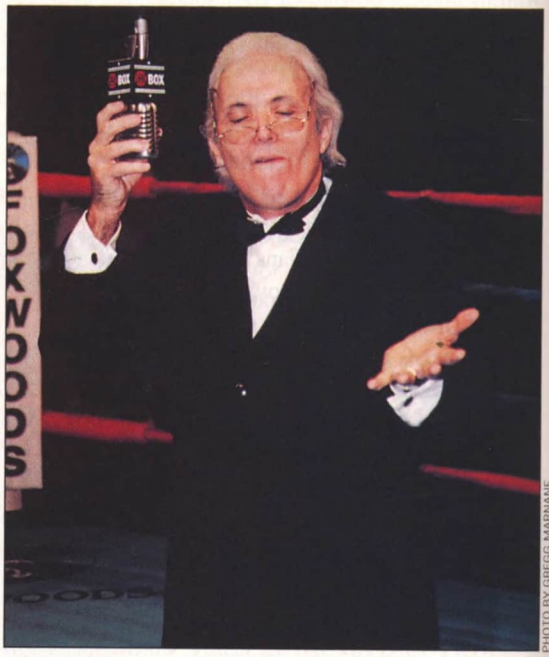


PHOTO BY GREGG MARNANE

It's been way too long since we've seen Mark Beiro in the "Camera Clicks" section. Here, the personable ring announcer does his Benjamin Franklin impression as he unveils his new catchphrase, "Are you ready to feel the electricity?!"

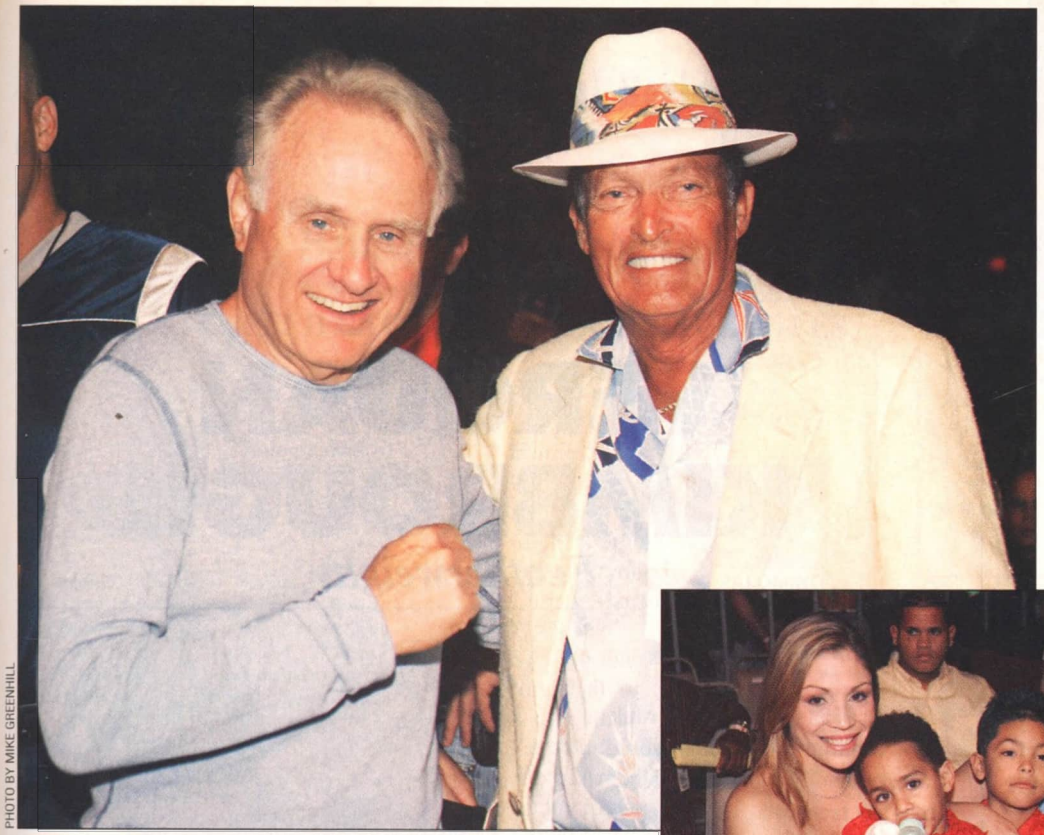


PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

The next big HBO Sports sensation: Golfing After Dark. Links legend Chi Chi Rodriguez ran the idea by HBO expert analyst Larry Merchant at a recent fight, but we're not sure if it'll fly.

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Some people in the fight game like to call Miguel Cotto a "kid," but there are three people in this picture who call him "Daddy." The members of the outside-the-ring Team Cotto include (from left to right) family friend Maite Cruz, sons Miguel and Luis, wife Melissa, and daughter Alondra. By the way, that kid sucking on the bottle doesn't look anything at all like his dad, does he?

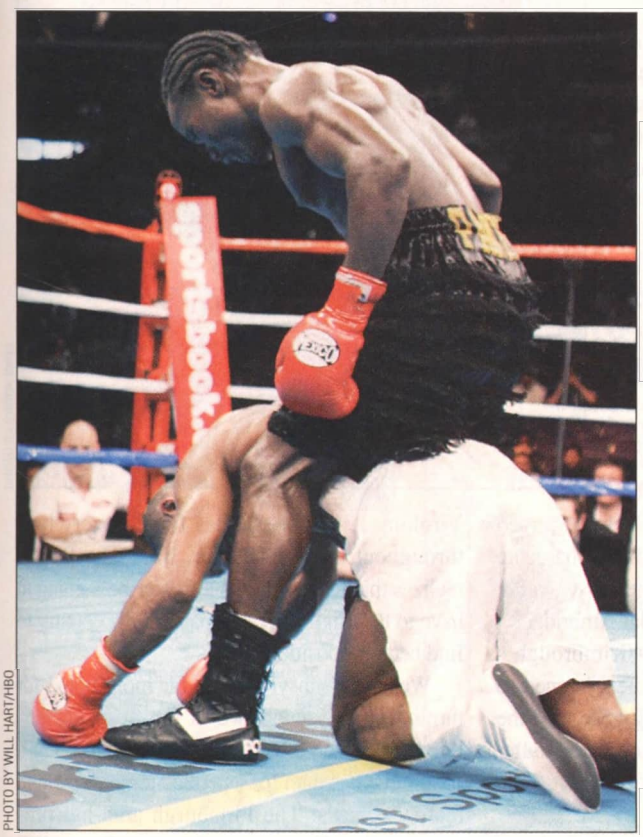
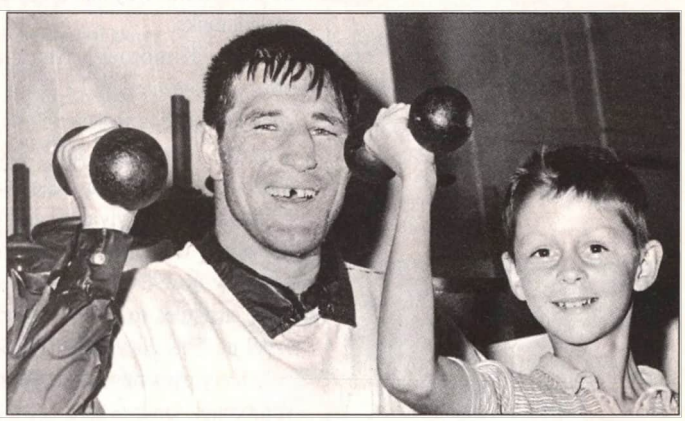


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Junior Witter thought he was having himself a boxing match, but apparently opponent Lovemore Ndou decided it was piggy-back-ride time. Needless to say, this was not ruled a knockdown.

NOSTALGIA CORNER



"Watch where you're swinging that dumbbell, kid, or you might knock out the rest of my teeth!" Light heavyweight contender Yvon Durelle, in training for his August 1959 title challenge against Archie Moore, displays his gap-toothed grin as one of his fans, nine-year-old Andrew Oullette, joins him in some serious iron pumping.

NEW FACES

VERQUAN KIMBROUGH

Featherweight

By Joe Santoliquito

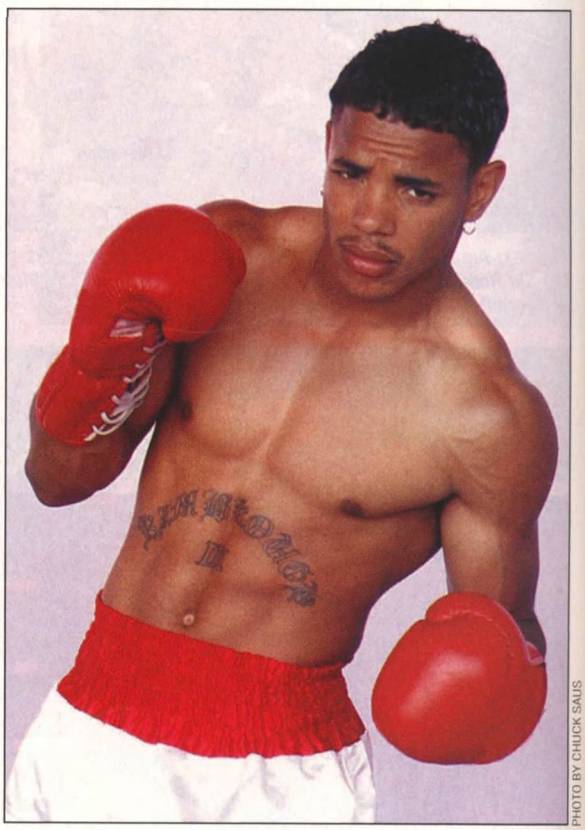


PHOTO BY CHUCK SAUS

The silent cry often came while running hills. Tears would pour down Verquan Kimbrough's face as he attempted to express the tension coursing through his little body. But no noise. There was never any sound when he opened his mouth.

These were the times Kimbrough wanted to give up. There must have been a thousand times when he wanted to quit, and at least a hundred times when he did. Yet he always came back. Always. And the same voice that implored him to run that extra hill, and stay for those few extra minutes hitting the heavybag, is still with Kimbrough today—as he makes his way up the featherweight ranks.

Since Kimbrough first started boxing when he was 11, Tom Yankello has been a presence in his life. Together, Kimbrough and Yankello have formed a strong bond, the 5'6" black kid from hardcore Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, and the crusty, older Italian guy from nearby, blue-collar Ambridge.

They now laugh together at Kimbrough's early struggles to enjoy a sport he's learned to excel in. The silent cries are long gone, and the only teary eyes now come from opponents after Kimbrough lands a hard bodyshot or a crushing left hook to the head.

Kimbrough, 10-0-1 (4), has developed into the featured fighter at the Mountaineer Race Track and Gaming Resort, in Chester, West Virginia. It's where he has fought every bout throughout his brief career. But "The Show" realizes that to advance as a fighter he's going to have to take fights in other parts of the country to find better opposition.

Western Pennsylvania is far more noted for turning out an abundance of top-flight quarterbacks like Joe Montana, Dan Marino, and Johnny Unitas than for its collection of top-flight featherweights. The Pittsburgh area has produced Hall of Famer Billy Conn and former IBF lightweight titlist Paul Spadafora, among others,

(Continued on page 70)

PRO RECORD

2003		
July 31	Eric Burke, Chester, WV	W 4
Sept. 2	David Maund, Chester	W 4
Oct. 29	Carl Hobgood, Chester	KO 1
Dec. 30	Margaro Senquiz, Chester	KO 1
2004		
Feb. 25	Tim Travis, Chester	KO 1
April 8	Terrence Roy, Chester	W 6
June 18	Yamin Mohammad, Chester	W 4
July 7	Ubaldo Olivencia, Chester	W 8
Aug. 19	Chris Burford, Chester	W 6
Sept. 30	Edward Valdez, Chester	D 6
Dec. 30	Terrell Hargrove, Chester	KO 1

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
10	10	0	1	4

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★ Virgil Hill
★ Kid Gavilan
★ Ken Buchanan
★ Alexis Arguello
★ Buddy McGirt
★ Pipino Cuevas
★ Nino Benvenuti
★ "Irish" Micky Ward
★ Carlos Palomino
★ Ricardo "Finito" Lopez
★ Sir Henry Cooper
★ Dwight Qawi
★ Tommy Morrison
★ Angelo Dundee
★ Johnny Tapia
★ Andrew Golota
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★ Benvenuti - Griffith

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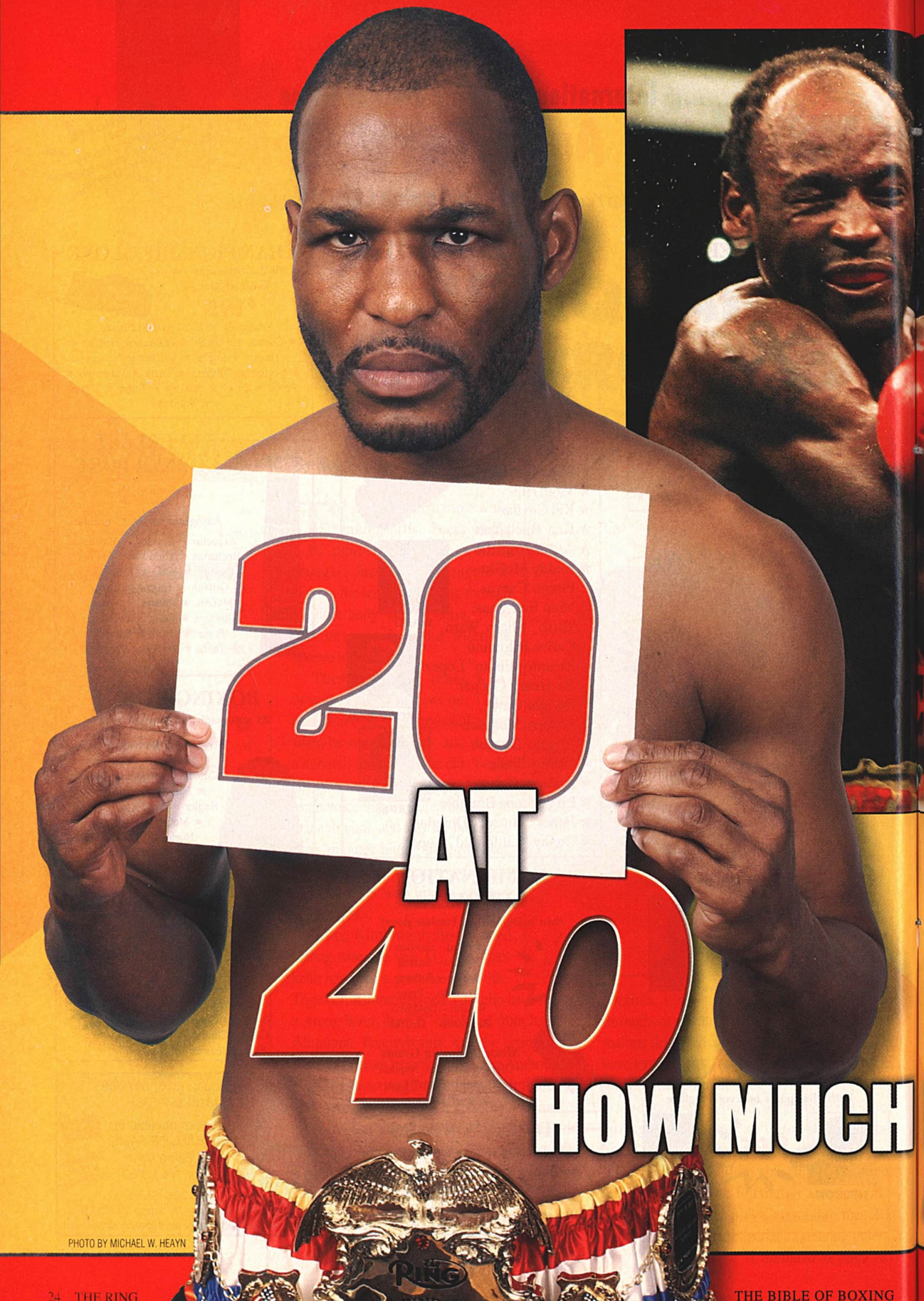
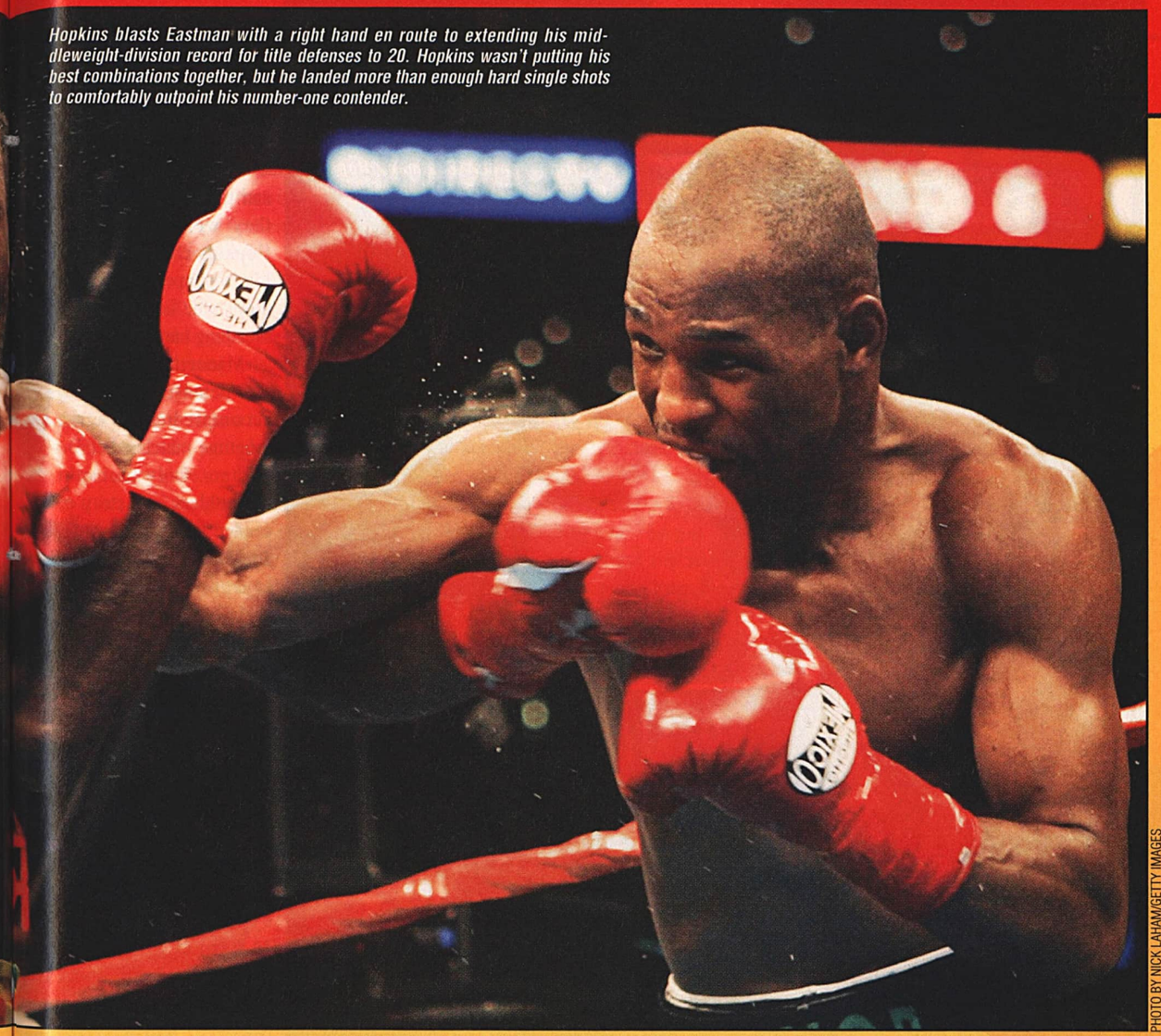


PHOTO BY MICHAEL W. HEAYN



Hopkins blasts Eastman with a right hand en route to extending his middleweight-division record for title defenses to 20. Hopkins wasn't putting his best combinations together, but he landed more than enough hard single shots to comfortably outpoint his number-one contender.

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

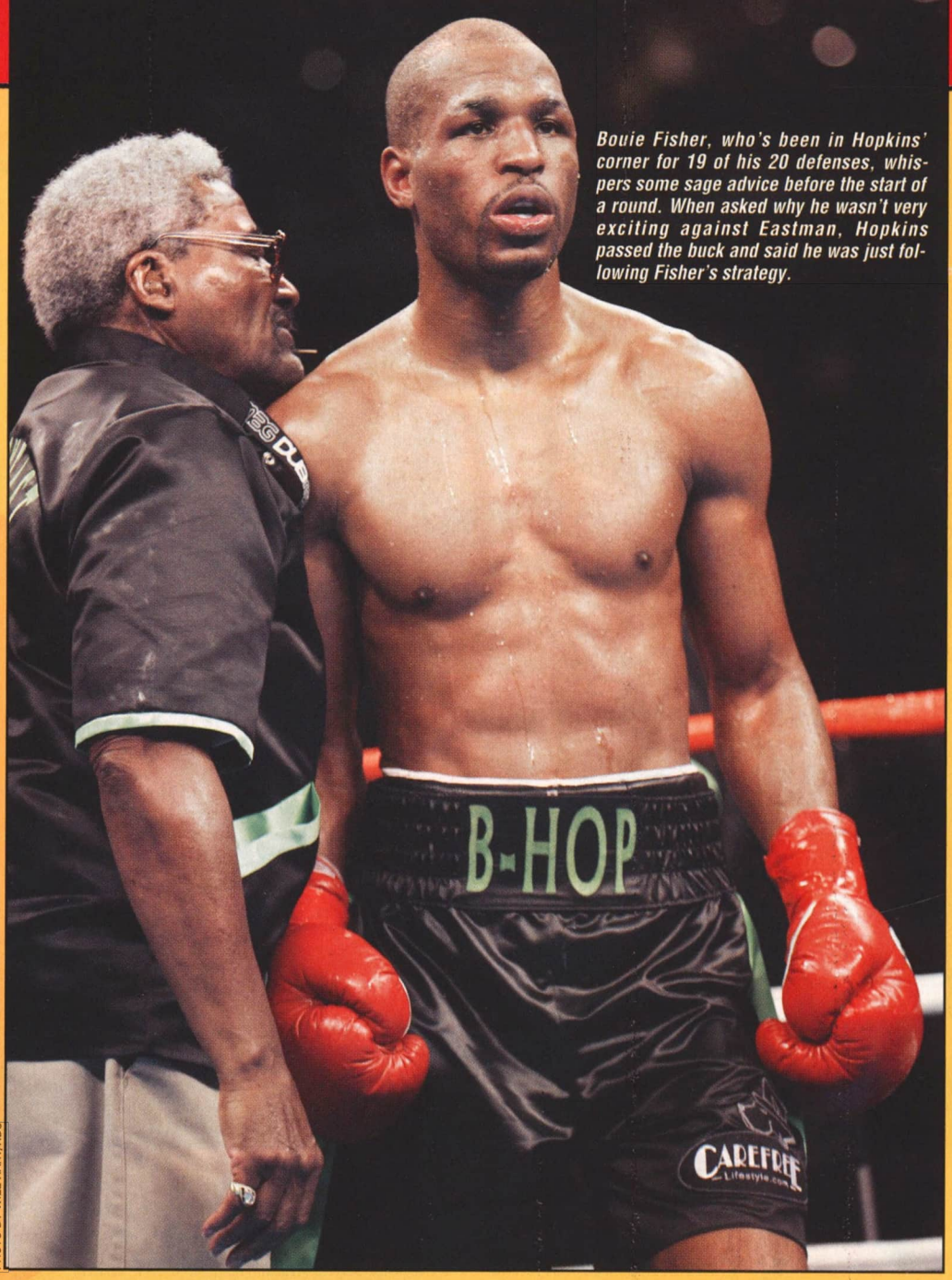
HOW MUCH MORE CAN HOPKINS ACCOMPLISH BEFORE 41?

By Ivan Goldman

Notching the 20th successful defense of his middleweight title meant the world to Bernard Hopkins. Was this magic figure as significant as he made it out to be? The succinct answer is yes.

Compare his feat to milestones in baseball, where players who reach 3,000 hits or 500 home runs are enshrined in a kind of living pantheon. These accomplishments are considered proof of ultra-mortal tenacity and talent, the kind that lasts eternally.

But when you measure baseball superstars' feats against those of Hopkins, all the things those players didn't have to do



Bouie Fisher, who's been in Hopkins' corner for 19 of his 20 defenses, whispers some sage advice before the start of a round. When asked why he wasn't very exciting against Eastman, Hopkins passed the buck and said he was just following Fisher's strategy.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

comprise a long list. They didn't have to triumph in 20 consecutive outings with no one in the game to back them up. They didn't have to make weight each time. They could take some games off when they didn't feel up to snuff. Their averages could and did slip near the end, when those young pitchers started getting the best of them. And none of them had somebody pounding on him with evil intentions throughout every contest.

"Look at all the athletes from other sports who go to boxing matches," pointed out promoter Lou DiBella. "Do you know why? Because they understand how hard it is."

DiBella was at Los Angeles' Staples Center to cheer on his own middleweight, Jermain Taylor, who impressively stopped Daniel Edouard of Haiti inside of three rounds in the HBO semifinal.

Hopkins, 46-2-1 (32) with 1 no-contest, amazingly trim and tricky at age 40, has taken on all comers since winning the IBF belt in April 1995. He's been in some rough contests, but never absorbed a beating. By the time he fought Challenger 20 Howard Eastman at the Staples Center, he owned THE RING championship and all the major alphabet belts. When the bell sounded to end the contest, Eastman, an Englishman by way of Guyana, joined a large, sorrowful group of other challengers who stood baffled, battered, and trying to figure where they went wrong. This Hopkins character fought like a puppet master. And how come he wasn't even breathing hard?

Managing 20 consecutive defenses was a huge accomplishment, agreed longtime matchmaker Don Elbaum. Only four other titleholders in history exceeded that—heavyweight Joe Louis with 25, light heavyweight Dariusz Michalczewski with 23, super middleweight Sven Ottke with 21, and strawweight Ricardo Lopez with 21. Among that group, only Louis held more than a partial title. Heavyweight Larry Holmes also hit the magic 20. Hopkins had long since passed the former middleweight record held by Carlos Monzon with 14 defenses.

"Bernard hasn't ducked anybody outside of arguing over dollar situations," Elbaum said. "He fought the best. And I don't mean just Felix Trinidad and Glen Johnson. Look at Antwun Echols, Syd Vanderpool, Andrew Council—believe me, nobody wanted to fight those guys."

But retired promoter and 2005 International Boxing Hall of Fame inductee Don Fraser, looking at Hopkins from the standpoint of a man who had to sell tickets to eat, viewed Hopkins' performance against Eastman differently. "He doesn't take a chance," Fraser complained. "He doesn't try to get the guy out of there, and whenever he hit Eastman, the guy took his punches. He doesn't belong in the class of Sugar Ray Robinson, Monzon, or Marvelous Marvin Hagler. I would add Jake

LaMotta and Kid Gavilan. He would have trouble with those guys. Even Hurricane Carter could punch. Joey Giardello would be a tough fight for him. Sugar Ray Leonard and Thomas Hearns (best known as welterweights) could beat him. But nobody will ever know for sure."

Fraser sees only two credible opponents on the list of 20, Trinidad and Glen Johnson. "Those other guys, they've vanished. It's the state of boxing today. There are a lot of mediocre fighters. One guy stands out and they want to make a legend out of him."

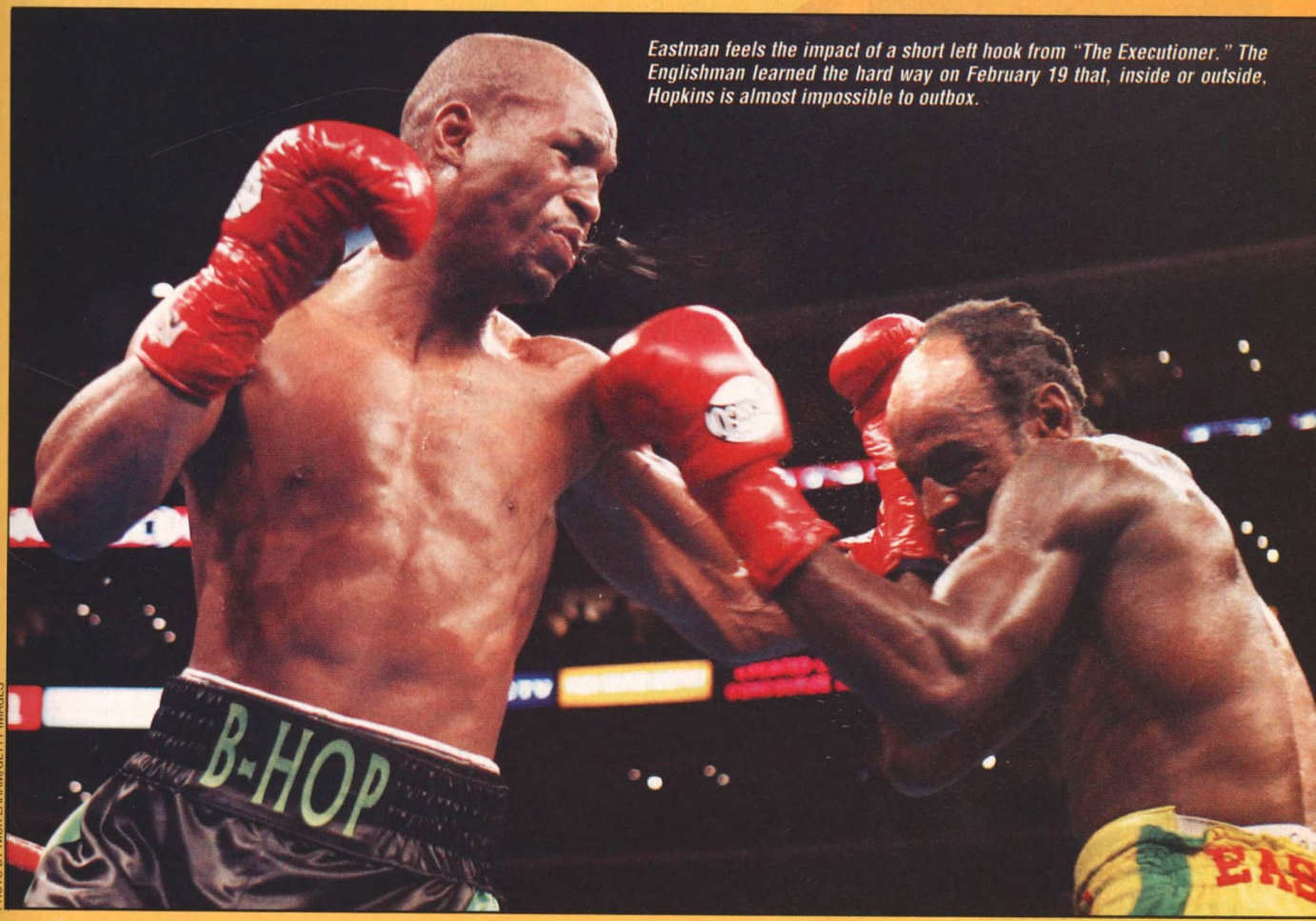
Elbaum, who agreed Hopkins doesn't belong among the top 10 middleweights of all-time, saw the glass as half-full. "Just being in the top 20, that's pretty damn good. Hopkins is not Archie Moore (known primarily as a light heavyweight), but he's like Archie Moore. That means he's one of the best fighters ever. Inside, outside, they can't beat him. Hopkins has been a great one—one of the great middleweights of our time, no matter what happens from this point on. You look at Louis and Lopez—not everyone they fought was great."

It's a testament to Hopkins' stature that his contest with Eastman, who'd previously fought in the U.S. only once, sold nearly 13,000 tickets in a city where conventional wisdom says only Latino fighters can draw a crowd. Sometimes timing is everything, and the timing for this one was perfect—after the Super Bowl, before baseball spring training. And with the NHL season cancelled, there was no hockey. Scheduled the night before the NBA All-Star game, the fight faced no competition from basketball, either.

The crowd of 12,828 was no casino gathering of gamblers who got in free, don't know much about the sport, and show up only for the main event. But many fans became irritated with "The Executioner's" caution. He won almost every round, but the fighters didn't really get going until round four, and after that, action was sporadic, mostly in small spurts. So fans both booed and cheered. They watched a master at work, but he was a master determined not to risk an extended combination unless he wobbled his opponent first with one of his short, explosive bursts. That extended combination never materialized. Hopkins is no rock 'em, sock 'em banger, but rather a cerebral hooligan, striking when and where the opponent least suspects it and then gliding out of harm's way.

Time after time, Hopkins turned Eastman's aggression against him. Though tough and skilled, Eastman just couldn't get anything done. And occasionally Hopkins, employing pinpoint timing, would score with a lead right or a beautiful hook and be back in his envelope before the sweat flew off Eastman's head. He also scored with punishing jabs.

Hopkins won practically every exchange, sometimes by only a little, sometimes by a lot. Trying to hit him flush is like trying to throw a ring around a bottle



Eastman feels the impact of a short left hook from "The Executioner." The Englishman learned the hard way on February 19 that, inside or outside, Hopkins is almost impossible to outbox.

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

JUST A COUPLE OF SUPERFIGHTS BEFORE I GO ...

Hopkins says he will hang up his gloves by his 41st birthday on January 15, 2006. And he's just unique enough to retire when he says he will without changing his mind and trying a comeback.

He has three potential superfights out there—rematches with Trinidad or Johnson, now THE RING light heavyweight champion, or an outing against the impressive Taylor, 23-0 (17), who looks to all the world like the division's future.

"We'll see where we can get the best deal," said Richard Schaeffer, who runs the business end of Golden Boy Promotions.

Hopkins, who joined De La Hoya's promotional company as a participating partner after defeating him, says from here on in he will accept no meaningless mandatories dictated by the alphabet groups. He'd also like to get in as many as four more bouts before he retires. But it takes time to put together and publicize major pay-per-view cards. Should he stick with the January date, it's unlikely he can face more than two opponents, if that many. Trinidad was already scheduled against Winky Wright May 14 in Las Vegas.

Hopkins has little to prove against Trinidad or Johnson. He stopped both of them inside the distance. But if he took the crown from Johnson he would have won undisputed titles in the middleweight and light heavyweight divisions, something not even Sugar Ray Robinson achieved. Of course, Robinson started out as a welter.

A fourth possible opponent could be the winner of the Joe Calzaghe-Brian Magee match that was scheduled for March 18 in Belfast, Northern Ireland, but that doesn't really qualify as a superfight. As "The Executioner" has cleaned out the rest of the 160-pound division, the most intriguing contest would be against hard-hitting Olympian Taylor, 26, who now says he's ready for Hopkins.

The hungry young lion and the aging, crafty lion can go past each other in the night or stop and make history.

—IG

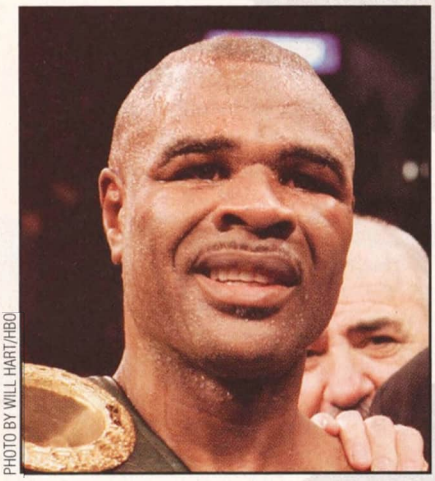


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

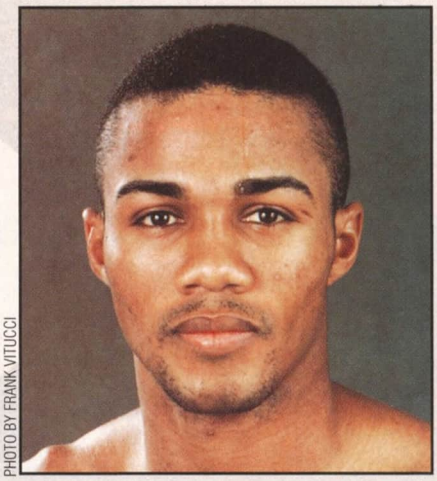


PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

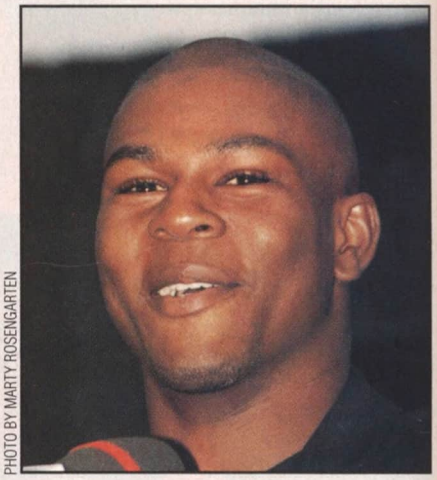


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Johnson, Trinidad, and Taylor are all on Hopkins' '05 hit list

in one of those can't-win carnival games. CompuBox credited Eastman with only 82 connects out of 609 punches thrown, for a dismal 13 percent success rate. That's an average of fewer than seven scoring punches per round. Hopkins landed 148 of 346, for a 43 percent connect rate. And he landed better punches.

Judge Lou Filippo of California saw it 119-110, Daniel Van De Wile of Belgium 117-111, and Ken Morita of Japan 116-112, all for Hopkins. THE RING scored it for the champ, 118-111.

"My goal was to get 20 defenses," Hopkins said. He was "not looking to bore a crowd," he explained, but he's just no kayo artist. "I'm more of a technician. I will eventually get you out of there or beat you up." Those not thrilled, he said, can place some of the blame on his longtime trainer Bouie Fisher, who directed strategy.

Eastman, 40-2 (35), claimed that Hopkins ran, so he deserved a rematch. None of the press seemed to agree, but everyone was polite. Though fight writers can be a nasty bunch, they commiserated with someone who'd just suffered through 12 exasperating rounds with Hopkins.

Eastman also complained that referee Raul Caiz Jr. was too quick to break the clinches. Elbaum agreed, but added that it "didn't make any difference." That's because Hopkins was much more effective than Eastman in close, roughing up his opponent and threading the needle with head-jarring uppercuts. Plotting an inside strategy against Hopkins is like engaging a tank with a convertible.

Hopkins has been a special fighter for a long time. He turned pro as a light heavyweight in 1988, was down to middleweight by his sixth fight, and has stayed there throughout his career, which is almost unheard of. His ability to maintain his weight for so many years had much to do with making 20 defenses possible. But what really sets Hopkins apart is his training ethic.

"Hopkins takes only five days off after a fight. Then he's back in the gym," said Elbaum. "And he never lets his weight go above 166," unlike so many middleweights who walk around at 175 or more, then dehydrate them-

selves before a fight to make 160.

Hopkins didn't become a true star until he shocked the oddsmakers with his utter domination and brutalization of the great Trinidad in September 2001 at Madison Square Garden, stopping him in round 12.

Up until then, Hopkins was probably better known for his articulate complaints that the business side of boxing has a built-in bias against the fighters. He was also known as a miserable man to negotiate with. The self-managed Hopkins intensified that reputation when he broke with both Fisher and adviser DiBella after beating Trinidad, and then turned down $6-million for a rematch because Trinidad, with his much bigger following, would earn more.

Aging Hopkins, acting like he had all the time in the world, ultimately ended up in another superfight three years later, this time knocking out De La Hoya in round nine with a vicious bodyshot. Sharing in the bounty was Fisher, back in Hopkins' corner.

Hopkins' rise from the penitentiary and the rough streets of Philadelphia is actually no aberration within the world of boxing, an exceptionally demanding discipline that has the power to redeem the lost. But Hopkins' accomplishments within the ring have been truly remarkable. New promotional partner and former foe De La Hoya marveled, "Twenty defenses. I don't think we'll ever see that again."

Hopkins has many ways to turn as he decides on his next opponents, and he will be second-guessed by everybody. But whether the challenge is a fight, a negotiation, or the broader, seemingly impenetrable challenge posed by life itself, Hopkins has time and again drawn upon a mysterious capacity to make it all come out right in the end. ■

Ivan Goldman is THE RING'S West Coast correspondent.

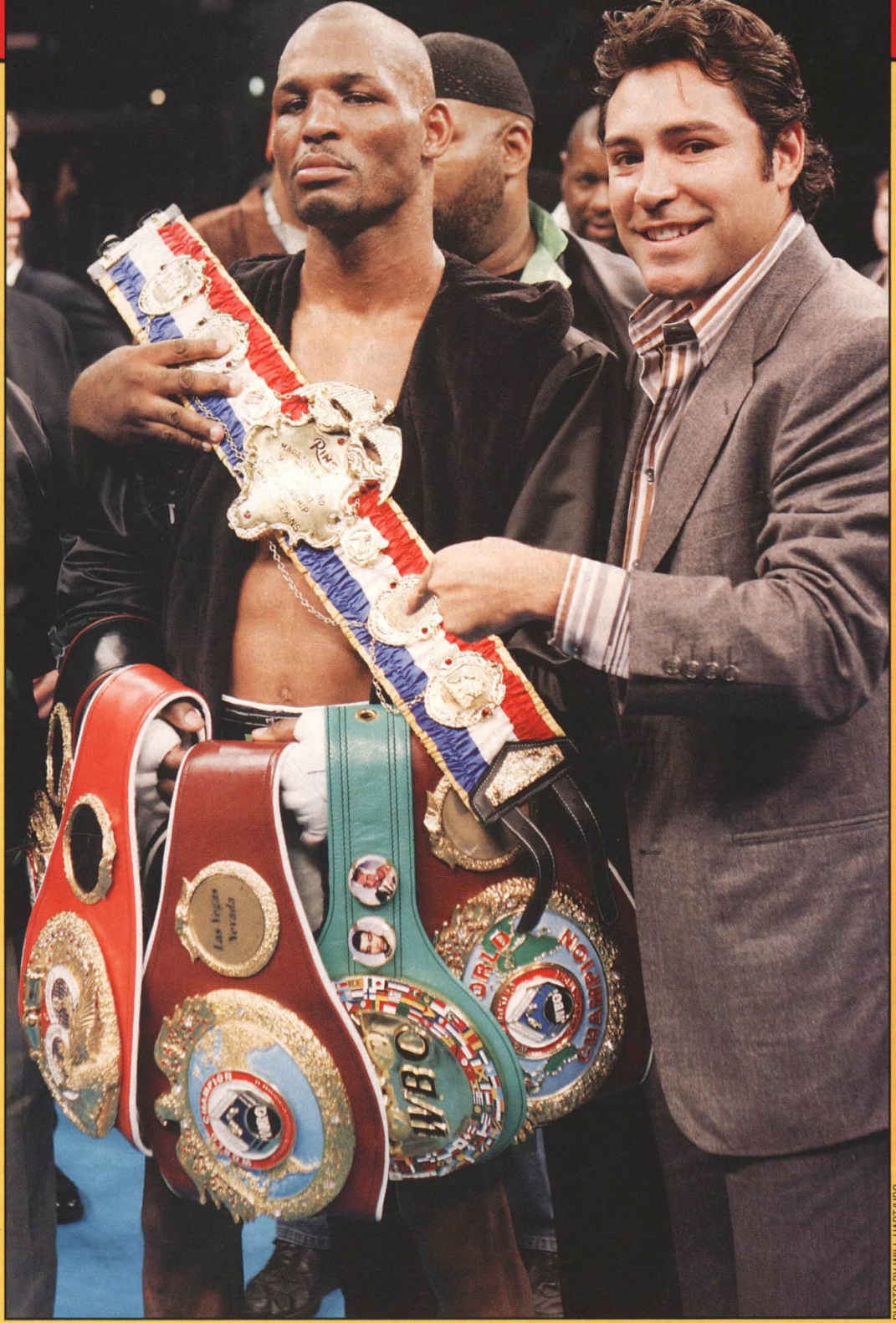


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Hopkins' new promoter and business partner, Oscar De La Hoya, points to the champ's RING belt, while Hopkins holds his plentiful collection of alphabet trinkets. De La Hoya, perhaps going a bit overboard, marveled that he didn't think Hopkins' run of 20 defenses would ever be equaled.

TRINIDAD vs. WRIGHT

20 Experts Agree ... This One's A Tough Call

Compiled by Joe Santoliquito

It would be hard to find a more diverse pair of fighters than Felix "Tito" Trinidad and Ronald "Winky" Wright. You have Trinidad, constantly coming forward, looking to demolish everything in his path with one left hook, while Wright would rather nibble at opponents gradually and defeat them with boxing skills and intelligence.

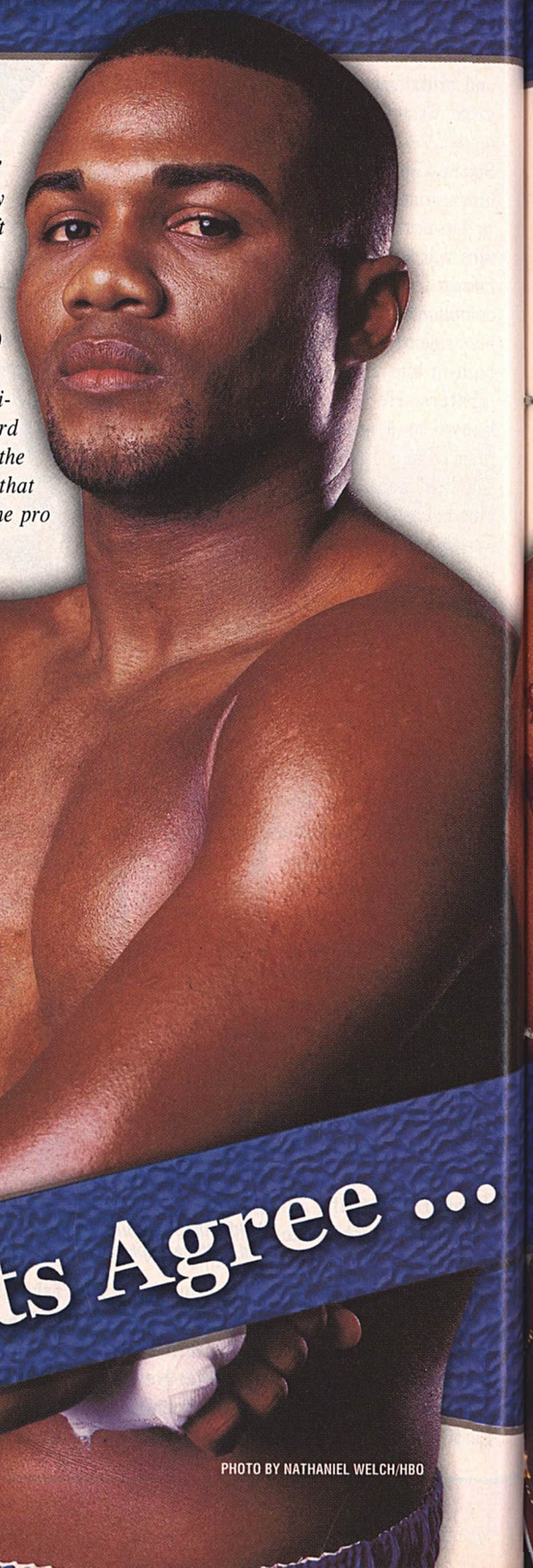
It will be a perfect contrast of styles when middleweight contender Trinidad and world junior middleweight champion Wright fight at 160 pounds on May 14 at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

After a two-year hiatus from the ring, Trinidad, 42-1 (35), made a triumphant comeback against rugged Ricardo Mayorga, a straight-forward brawler who fit perfectly into Trinidad's scheme and was knocked out in the eighth round. The capacity crowd that filled Madison Square Garden that October 2004 night immediately began chanting for Tito to avenge his lone pro loss, to world middleweight champion Bernard Hopkins.

But first, Trinidad must get past southpaw Wright, 48-3 (25), who is coming off a pair of 12-round decisions over Shane Mosley. While those victories were undeniably impressive, it must be noted that Wright has not stopped an opponent since February 2002, when he finished Jason Papillion in five rounds. Certainly, Wright's power isn't going to improve at middleweight, but he'll probably carry the added weight comfortably, as he is considered to be a large junior middleweight.

So it may all come down to who can succeed in making the other fight his style: boxer Wright or puncher Trinidad.

THE RING polled 20 experts to find out who they think will win. The results were just about as close as most think the fight will be.



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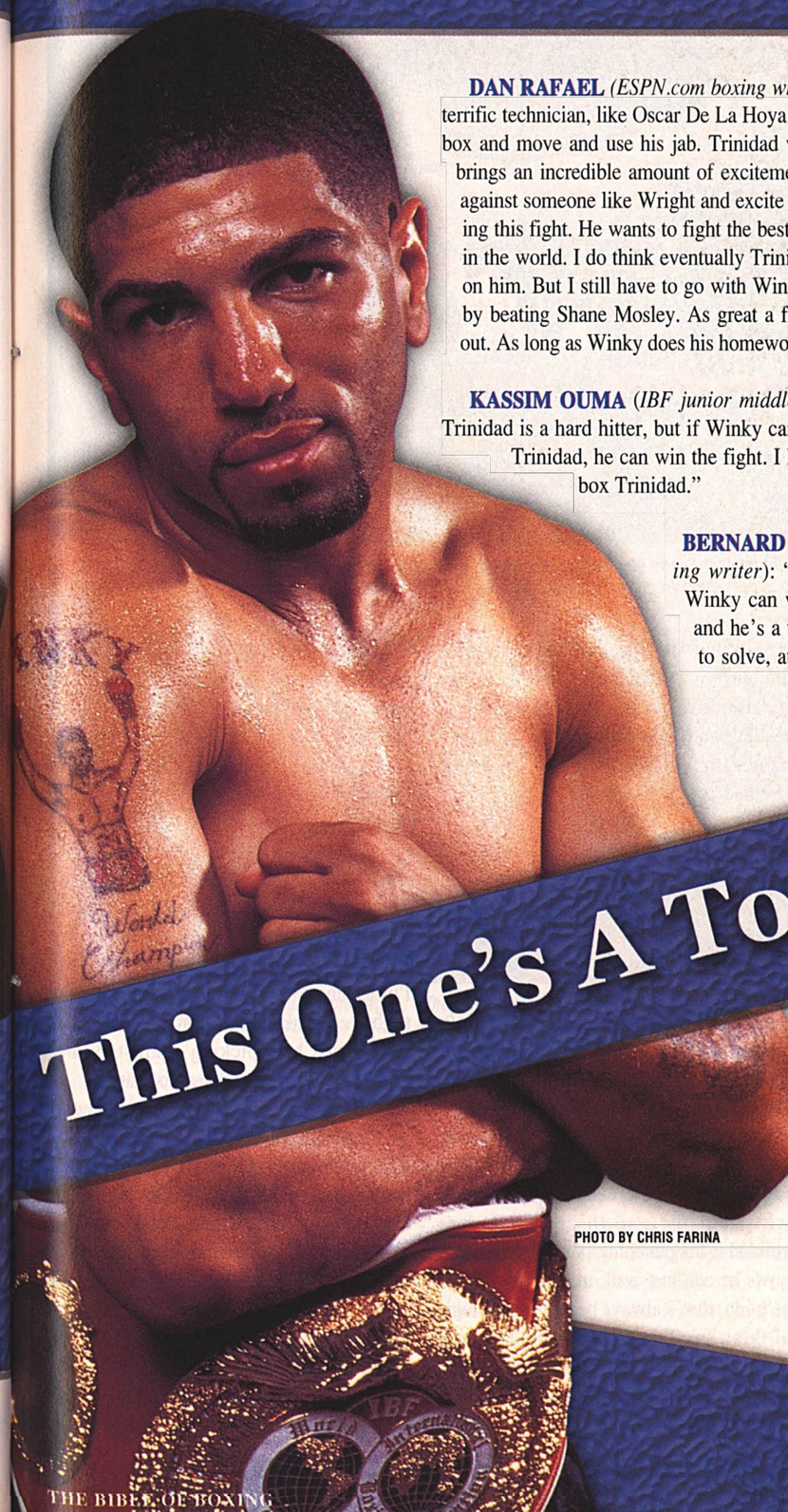

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

DAN RAFAEL *(ESPN.com boxing writer)*: "I think it is a fascinating fight. Winky's a terrific technician, like Oscar De La Hoya and Bernard Hopkins. His calling card will be to box and move and use his jab. Trinidad will pressure Winky from the opening bell. Tito brings an incredible amount of excitement to his fights, and he'll want to prove a point against someone like Wright and excite the fans. Trinidad deserves a lot of credit for taking this fight. He wants to fight the best, and Winky is obviously one of the best fighters in the world. I do think eventually Trinidad will catch up with Winky and put some hurt on him. But I still have to go with Winky by decision. He proved a lot of people wrong by beating Shane Mosley. As great a fighter as Trinidad is, the blueprint has been laid out. As long as Winky does his homework, this is a winnable fight for Winky."

KASSIM OUMA *(IBF junior middleweight titlist)*: "It's difficult to pick a winner. Trinidad is a hard hitter, but if Winky can keep his hands up, against the heavy hands of Trinidad, he can win the fight. I like Winky by decision because Winky can outbox Trinidad."

BERNARD FERNANDEZ *(Philadelphia **Daily News** boxing writer)*: "It's an interesting matchup of styles. I think Winky can win. He's smart enough and he's slick enough, and he's a technician. Winky may be difficult for Trinidad to solve, at least for a while. But over the course of a 12-

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Many experts feel that if Wright can fight the way he did against Shane Mosley, staying on the outside, jabbing, and using his boxing ability, he has a good chance at winning. Win or lose, almost everyone agrees that Wright's tricky southpaw style will give Trinidad problems.

round fight, I think at some point, the pendulum swings in the other direction and Tito wears him down. So I pick Trinidad by late-round stoppage."

OSCAR DE LA HOYA (*four-division ex-titlist and president of Golden Boy Promotions*): "I like Winky in that fight. He can box Trinidad and give him trouble. I think people will be surprised how Winky handles Trinidad with ease. I don't see Winky staying right in front of Trinidad."

TONY PAIGE (*radio host for New York's WFAN 660 AM*): "I see Trinidad winning by late-round stoppage. I say that because Trinidad carries his power late into fights, and as good a defensive fighter as Winky is, I don't know if he's ever faced someone with that type of power. I would be surprised if Winky tried to be the aggressor. That's not his style. Trinidad has been in so many big fights, but Winky will make this fight extremely difficult."

LEM SATTERFIELD (***Baltimore Sun*** *boxing writer*): "Trinidad will win by a late-round stoppage. He will use pressure and force Winky to stand there and hit. Trinidad's pressure and his power is the key, and Winky Wright's ability to handle it or not handle it will determine the outcome."

THOMAS HAUSER (*lead writer for Secondsout.com*): "Trinidad by decision. Winky is a southpaw who is a skilled boxer, but Felix is bigger and better. Bigger and better usually wins fights."

BERNIE OSUNA (*Telefutura* ***Solo Boxeo*** *broadcaster*): "It's an awkward fight for Trinidad, but he really impressed me during his comeback against Mayorga. The weight difference will be in his favor, and he should come out on top. Winky is a tough fighter, and obviously styles make fights, but the one thing that favors Trinidad is his punching power. If Trinidad knows he can just walk in and do what he has to do, that's always been a psychological thing for Trinidad. I think Tito will wear down Winky Wright. It just may take three or four rounds to figure out Winky's awkward style."

AL BERNSTEIN (***Showtime Championship Boxing*** *color analyst*): "That's a great fight. It's an interesting fight. One of the things that's a little troubling from the Winky Wright standpoint is the amount of times he was hit in his last fight against Shane Mosley. It's the first time I saw gaps in Winky's defense. Other than that, Winky creates an interesting challenge for Trinidad, as he does against anyone. The problem against Trinidad is that he's one of the most accurate punchers in boxing today, I believe. I'm leaning toward Trinidad, but very, very slightly. I think Trinidad probably by decision. I just hate picking against Winky Wright, because he's so hard to beat."

FRANKLIN McNEIL (***Newark Star-Ledger*** *boxing writer*): "I've gone back and forth over this, and there is something about Winky Wright that makes me lean toward him. Winky is definitely a busy fighter and he takes a punch, but I'm not sure how well he'll be able to take Trinidad's punch. He doesn't have the punch to keep Trinidad honest, but he is slick enough to keep Trinidad off of him. I'm going out on a limb and picking

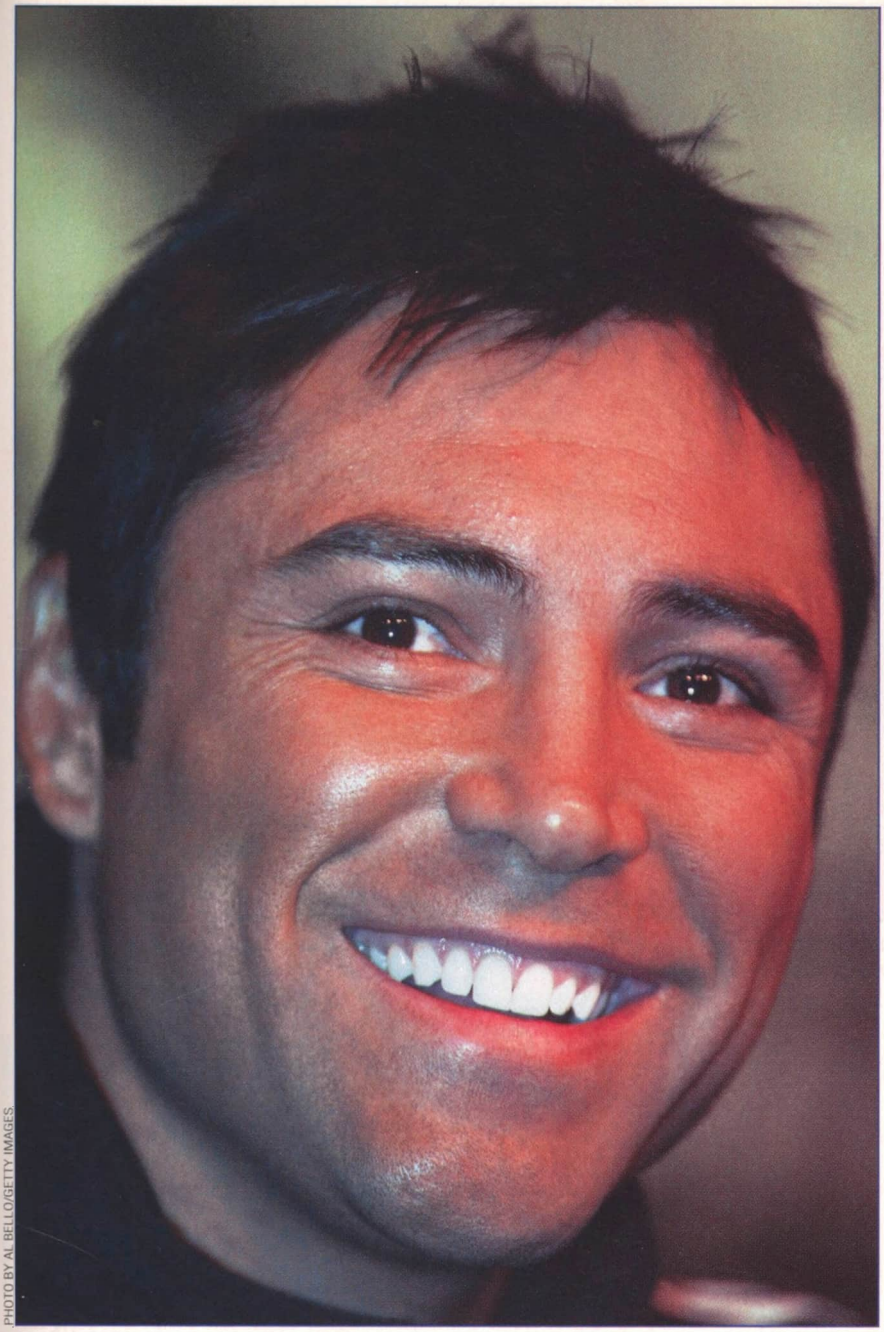

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Oscar De La Hoya is on the Wright bandwagon. "The Golden Boy" believes Wright can comfortably outbox Trinidad, the man who, via controversial decision, handed De La Hoya his first loss.

Winky. If he can withstand Trinidad's power, especially early, I'll say Winky wins by decision."

RICH MAROTTA (*host of* ***Neutral Corner*** *on Los Angeles' XTRA 690/1150 AM*): "It's a good fight, a competitive fight. It's a fight where each guy has a chance to win, but I expect Felix Trinidad to win. Tito will probe for a while before he finally figures Winky out, which will take a few rounds, but Tito will be a convincing winner in the end. I don't see Winky getting knocked out or stopped, because Winky takes a good punch and he is tough to hit."

KEVIN IOLE (*Las Vegas* ***Review-Journal*** *boxing writer*): "It's a tough fight, and I've gone back and forth on it, but right now I have a slight lean toward Winky. It is such a tough fight that I can easily see it going either way. If you can box, be nimble, and you're able to move, those fighters give Tito trouble. It's the reason why I lean ever so slightly toward Winky."

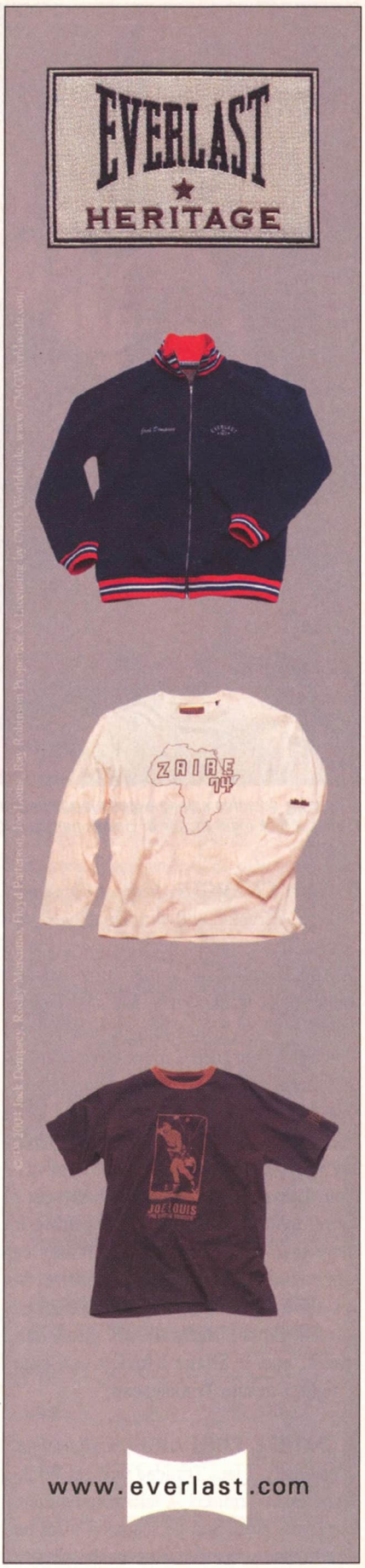

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

A looming question among experts is whether or not Wright will be able to withstand Trinidad's punching power. Iron-jawed Ricardo Mayorga couldn't, though it took eight rounds of vicious hammering for Trinidad to put him away.

DON CHARGIN (*Hall of Fame promoter*): "Trinidad will win. He's too strong and he'll be able to neutralize the jab of Winky. To me, Tito looks a lot stronger, and I don't think Winky has anything to keep Felix off. Winky may be able to keep Felix away for a few rounds, but the bigger, stronger guy will win."

GRAHAM HOUSTON (*veteran boxing writer*): "Trinidad will win by a decision. I don't think he'll get Winky out of there, even though Winky is getting hit more than he used to get hit. Winky can win rounds and make it competitive, but it's just a matter of the bigger, stronger guy winning out. Trinidad has good hand speed, and if Shane Mosley can catch Wright, I'm sure Trinidad can."

DANIEL EDOUARD (*middleweight*): "Personally, I feel Trinidad will get Winky. I just think Trinidad is throwing combinations very well, and he's boxing a lot better. He moves better than he has before, and he has a punch. Once Winky realizes he can't push Trinidad back, he's going to have trouble. I think it's going to be a good fight, but by the sixth or seventh rounds, Trinidad will start getting to Winky."

KEITH IDEC (*New Jersey* ***Herald News*** *boxing writer*): "Wright will win by unanimous decision. Winky is going to be much, much tougher to hit than Ricardo Mayorga, who was basically a punching bag for Trinidad. Trinidad is a devastating puncher, and he'll check Winky's chin more than once, but Winky has taken some pretty good punches during his career. I just see Winky being smart enough and active enough to stay away from Trinidad."

DOUG FISCHER (*Maxboxing.com editor*): "I like Felix Trinidad in the fight, and the main reason is that Winky Wright isn't a very mobile boxer. I think he is a very skilled boxer, a very good technician, but the way he likes to fight is that he stands his ground, or stalks forward. He can get away with that against a smaller guy like Shane Mosley, but it won't work against Felix Trinidad. Winky is a strong, tough guy, but I see Trinidad by a decision."

JIM LAMPLEY (*HBO blow-by-blow announcer*): "It's a very tough fight to pick. Felix is obviously stronger, but he's going to have to find a way to get around that guard. Winky is almost like a medieval knight, where he puts that shield up and comes forward. Winky puts his right arm in front of his body and his left is clamped to his rib cage and there's not a lot of room there. It's a hard style for anyone to deal with. To beat Winky, you must have foot movement, attack from either side. These things have not been Felix's forte in the past. This fight will require Felix to demonstrate his advanced boxing skills that he showed in beating Mayorga. He'll have to go in and box again and be more lateral and side-to-side in order to make his punching power the biggest factor in the fight. Felix will try to box with

PHOTO BY CHRIS TROTMAN/GETTY IMAGES

Though many predict a close, hard-fought match, with Wright causing Trinidad all sorts of trouble, the consensus among experts is that it will be the Puerto Rican who will have his hands raised in the end.

the boxer, and hope that will prompt Winky to take more chances. If I was forced to say one guy will win, Winky by an eyelash. I always prefer the boxing craftsman over the puncher."

JOE TESSITORE (ESPN blow-by-blow announcer): "I thought Trinidad was sensational against Mayorga, but everything Mayorga isn't, Winky Wright is. It's a very difficult fight to call, but if pressed, I'd have to say Winky by decision. I base that on Winky's boxing ability. Mayorga was a perfect opponent to come back with for Trinidad, but the worst opponent to prepare him for someone like Winky Wright."

TRAVIS SIMMS (*junior middleweight contender*): "I think Felix Trinidad will win the fight, mainly because Wright doesn't have enough power to slow Trinidad down and stop his attack. Winky Wright won't be strong enough to deal with Felix Trinidad. This is one of those fights that will go into the late rounds, and I'm leaning toward a 12-round decision for Trinidad."

TOTALS: Trinidad 12, Wright 8 ■

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REJUVENATED ROCK'S READY TO ROLL AGAINST KLITSCHKO

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

"I Feel As Fresh As A Newborn Baby"

By Mike Houser

For most of us, middle age and wisdom go hand in hand, and we are left wishing we could hit the rewind button and return to that time in our lives when our dreams were still within reach.

Not yet in the clutches of middle age, former world heavyweight champion Hasim Rahman nonetheless had a moment of clarity following his defeat to WBA heavyweight strapholder John Ruiz in December 2003.

"I began to feel like I didn't want to be 37 or 38 and thinking back, *If I did this and that I could've been the two-time heavyweight champion of the world*," said the 32-year-old Rahman just before he began training for his April 30 bout at Madison Square Garden with world heavyweight champion Vitali Klitschko. "With school or relationships or whatever, we can always say, 'If I had known then what I know now, I could've done this or that.' But I know it now. I'm young enough to come back and do it now. I'm in a good position. It's my time. I feel as fresh as a newborn baby."

On April 22, 2001, Rahman stunned the boxing world, not to mention Lennox Lewis, with a picture-perfect right hand that sent the big Brit crashing to the canvas in the fifth round of their title bout in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Forget about *could've been*, Rahman *was* on top of the world, the baddest man on the planet. As the linear champion, he carved his name into the hallowed halls of heavyweight history: John L. Sullivan ...

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Rahman rips Kali Meehan with a left hook in their November '04 fight that pushed "The Rock" back into the thick of the title picture. Meehan was coming off a strong performance against Lamon Brewster two months earlier, but Rahman dominated the New Zealander for as long as the fight lasted.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

The towering Klitschko was just too much for Danny Williams, who was vanquished in eight rounds last December. The Ukrainian champ started as a 3-1 favorite to beat Rahman, and the challenger acknowledges that he's facing an extremely difficult task.

Jack Johnson ... Jack Dempsey ... Joe Louis ... Rocky Marciano ... Muhammad Ali ... Larry Holmes ... Mike Tyson ... Evander Holyfield ... and Lewis.

But like Lewis, Rahman would soon have to learn one of life's lessons the hard way: Success can knock you off your pedestal as surely as a right hand to the jaw.

Instead of training his hardest before meeting Rahman, Lewis was leading the life of a fat cat, perspiring under the lights on the movie set of *Ocean's Eleven* in Las Vegas. Meanwhile the Baltimore, Maryland, native was busy spilling his sweat in Johannesburg a month early in order to get acclimated to the altitude and time zone. But Lewis learned from the humbling experience, and less than seven months after losing his title to the hungry Rahman, he returned the favor and dispatched Rahman with a crushing right hand in the fourth round of their rematch.

"After I knocked out Lennox Lewis, I thought I could show up and do nothing and win," Rahman said. "Against fighters that didn't appear to be dangerous, I thought I could show up and give 40 or 50 percent and win the fight."

Rahman wasn't as quick on the uptake as Lewis, and his lackadaisical attitude carried over into his subsequent three matches. There was his dreary effort against an aged Evander Holyfield, where a headbutt-induced hematoma sprouted up on Rahman's forehead like a volcano ready to erupt.

That technical decision loss was Rahman's lone bout of 2002, and the following year he fought only twice. First up was a rematch with David Tua, who had ended Rahman's 29-fight winning streak in 1998 with a controversial 10th-round TKO. Rahman went the distance this time, and even though many thought he deserved the nod, Rahman could've done more and received a draw.

With 2003 ending and the window on a rubber match with Lewis rapidly closing, The Rock hit bottom with a sluggish performance against Ruiz, losing a unanimous decision, but gaining further insight.

"I learned that boxing is not a walk in the park," Rahman said. "Doing the minimum isn't good enough in the heavyweight division. If I had given 100 percent in every one of my fights, I'd still be undefeated. The more dangerous a fighter appears to be, I'll show up. Look at my first fight with Lewis. Look at my first fight with David Tua."

It may be even more instructive to look back on what happened after his first encounter with Tua. After rebounding with two victories, The Rock was faced with a fight he was expected to win against Oleg Maskaev, whom Rahman said he dismissed after seeing Oliver McCall destroy him in one round. The oversight led to the kind of knockout that gets replayed time and again, as Rahman lost focus and Maskaev knocked him clean out of the ring, onto the floor beside the timekeeper's table, in the eighth round.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

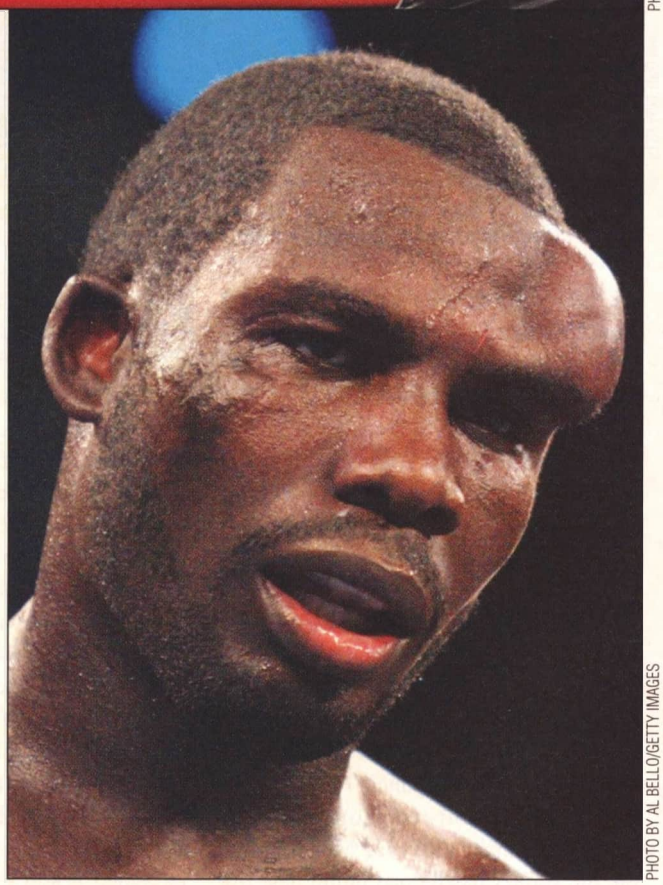


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

The lowest of lows: Rahman has known hard times in recent years, most notably in his upset loss to John Ruiz (above) and his unexpected defeat to Evander Holyfield in which The Rock suffered a grotesque hematoma (right). Those tough times, however, have helped Rahman mature.

Six months later, Rahman again lost focus and was decked by Corrie Sanders in the third round. But this time, Rahman responded with two knockdowns of his own and went on to halt his opponent in seven rounds.

In 2004, putting the Ruiz debacle behind him, Rahman took a decision over Al Cole in March for his first victory since he dethroned Lewis nearly three years prior. Then The Rock began to roll. He scored three two-round stoppages in a row, over Mario Cawley, Rob Calloway, and Terrance Lewis.

In August, Rahman found himself a new trainer in Thell Torrence, who boxed under and coached with the legendary Eddie Futch. The 68-year-old Torrence, who also trains former titlists Montell Griffin and Vassiliy Jirov, as well as heavyweight prospect Audley Harrison, said he didn't know what to expect from the former world champion.

"I didn't know much about Rahman. I hadn't seen that much of him," Torrence said. "I wanted to speak with him and see how we got along. After speaking with him, I was impressed with his attitude. He laid everything on the table. He told me all of the negative things and said he was a changed guy. I told him I'd work with him if he gave 100 percent or, if he had it, 110 percent. He said he'd do anything I told him to do."

So the pair broke down some tape on Kali Meehan, who was coming off a highly questionable decision loss to Lamon Brewster. The 6'5" Meehan had punished Brewster, breaking his jaw but leaving the ring with only a pat on the back from Don King and a November date with Rahman.

In his first fight under Torrence, Rahman, 40-5-1 (33), showed he still was a force as he overpowered, overwhelmed, and battered Meehan for four rounds before the fight was stopped. Showing an attitude befitting a trainer of his stature, Torrence wasn't about to do cartwheels and gush over his new charge's performance.

"I'm probably one of the most critical people and difficult to please when it comes to my fighters," Torrence said. "Hasim forced his jab a little and overran some of his punches by getting too close and smothering his own punches.

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Rahman took the slow road back after his nearly three-year-long winless streak, building his confidence back up against journeymen like Al Cole. Rahman struggled en route to winning a close decision in that fight, but got better over his next four.

He was so anxious and so eager. I would've liked to see him use his powerful jab to move Meehan into his powershots—see more power and snap. But he got the job done."

Rahman isn't the first fighter to tell Torrence what he wants to hear, but so far The Rock has been true to his word.

"He treats me with a lot of respect," Torrence said. "He believes in me. He makes my job easy. He's willing to work and to sacrifice. Everything I've told him to do, he's done it. He's a strong kid, He's an athlete. He's got guts and fights hard. And he's positive and believes in himself. Added to that, he can punch."

Recently returned from a trip to Mecca, Rahman, a devout Muslim, said the old trainer has helped pump new life into him.

"Thell's a teacher. I feel like I'm rejuvenated," Rahman said. "He can bring out the best in me. He can dissect my opponent, give me a game plan, and get me in shape. I didn't miss a day in the gym. I've got my mind right and I'm ready for more. I'm 100 percent focused. Klitschko's got my belt. I'm going to give it everything I've got."

If he's going to beat Klitschko, 35-2 (34), he'll have to. At just over 6'7", "Dr. Ironfist" owns a five-inch height advantage over Rahman. And if both fighters come in near their prime fighting weight, Klitschko, who weighs about 250 pounds, will hold anywhere from a 10- to 20-pound weight advantage.

"He may be a big tree, but I've got a big ax," Rahman said. "As soon as the bell rings, I'm going to chop him down."

Danny Williams, who was coming off a four-round knockout of Mike Tyson, attempted to bring the fight to the big Ukrainian in December, but was punished relentlessly, going down four times before being halted in eight rounds.

Although somewhat robotic, the powerful Klitschko has nonetheless evolved into an intelligent boxer, using his height and jab to good effect while maintaining relatively good balance and distance with his subtle footwork.

The HBO commentating crew of Jim Lampley, Larry Merchant, and Roy Jones, observed, however, that Klitschko appeared winded as he turned Williams into a heavybag for nearly 24 minutes. Klitschko has also been seen breathing heavily against Corrie Sanders and Lewis. But he's never lost a fight because of these perceived stamina issues. In addition to going 12 rounds with Timo Hoffman in his only decision victory, Klitschko has stopped two opponents—Vaughn Bean and Ross Purrity—in the 11th round.

And any criticism Klitschko received after he lost to Chris Byrd in 2000, when he quit on his stool with a torn rotator cuff following the ninth round in a fight he was winning comfortably on the scorecards, was answered with his spirited performance against Lewis in 2003. Klitschko showed both power and determination as he gave Lewis all he could handle before a deep cut over his left eye forced a halt to his campaign after six

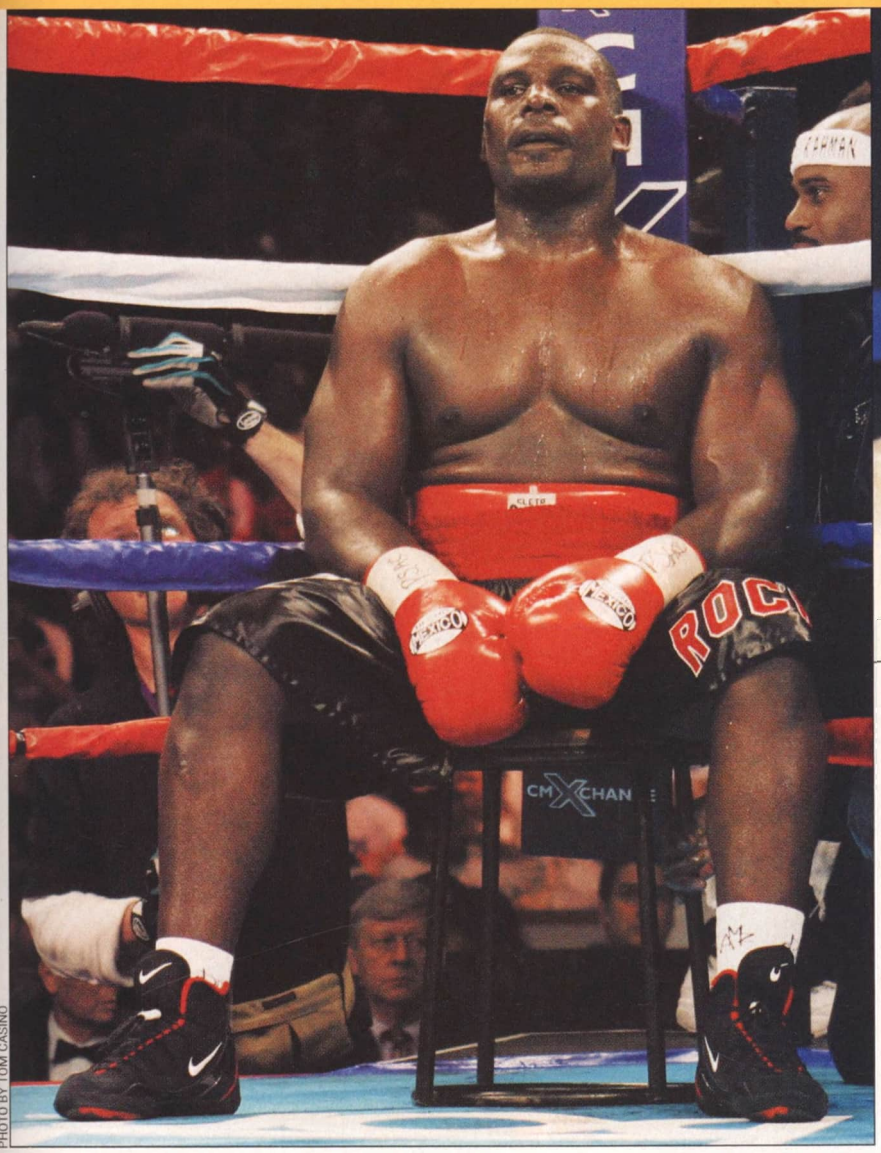


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

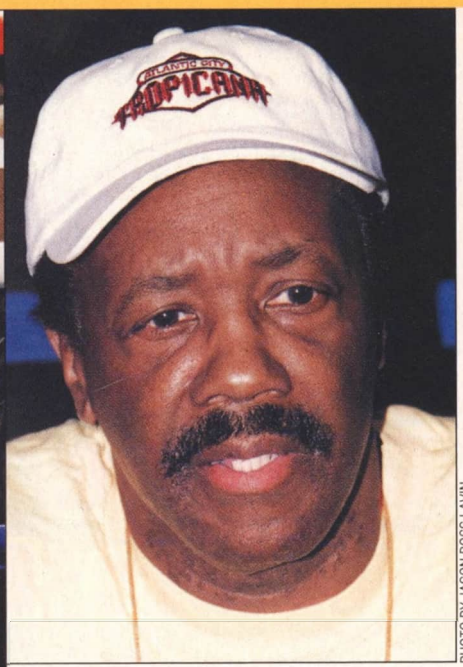


PHOTO BY JASON ROSS LAVIN

When he fought David Tua two years ago, Rahman looked unsightly at a career-high 259 pounds (left), but with the help of new trainer Thell Torrence (above), the former heavyweight champ is in much better shape these days. Torrence has been thrilled so far with Rahman's work ethic, and they both know The Rock has to be at his very best to upset Klitschko.

rounds. After Lewis retired rather than give Klitschko a rematch, Dr. Ironfist pounded a pudgy Sanders into submission in eight rounds to claim THE RING championship.

In spite of his recent success and his glib personality, Rahman gave Klitschko nothing but respect when speaking of their future matchup.

"In Vitali Klitschko I see a tough, strong, awkward boxer who can fight," Rahman said. "It's not going to be a cakewalk. I take him seriously. But I see several vulnerabilities in him too. Guys get hit so hard so early that they're not willing to take it to him. He can punch so hard that he can keep you on the outside and dictate how the fight goes. I expect to get hit real hard. But I absolutely refuse to leave the ring without the title."

As of February, Klitschko was a 3-1 favorite to retain his crown. Even so, there are several reasons not to discount Rahman's chances, not the least of which is his ability to end a fight if he lands his best punch.

Whatever Rahman gives up in height, he makes up for with his 82-inch reach, which is two inches longer than Klitschko's. When he has it working properly, Rahman may have the best jab in the division, and if he uses it to its maximum effect, he can simultaneously keep Klitschko off-balance and keep him from moving forward effectively. He can also use it to bust up the scar tissue over Klitschko's eye and employ it to set up his own powerful right hand.

There's also the unpredictability factor. Rahman has lost several fights he was generally expected to win (Maskaev, Holyfield, Ruiz) and come through well in some fights he was generally expected to lose (the first Lewis fight, the second Tua fight). The fact that he's an underdog against Klitschko would seem to make him extra dangerous.

Then there's the matter of motivation. If Rahman can get through Klitschko, he'll be in the driver's seat for a King heavyweight unification series. And if Lewis decides to make his return, a mega-million-dollar rubber match would be a natural.

"It's going to be the hardest fight of my life," Rahman said of meeting Klitschko. "I'm going to get hit harder than I've ever been hit. But I'm going to take what he's got and deliver my own. This fight is going to be a barnburner as soon as the bell rings. It's on, it's on, it's on."

It's not every man who realizes what he has before it's gone. For Rahman, this is one more chance to seize the moment, put the lessons of the past to use, and write the script to his own future. ■

Mike Houser is a boxing writer for the Nevada Appeal and a frequent contributor to this magazine.

Be Careful What You Wish For ...

Boxing fans eagerly await the June clash between Tszyu and Hatton on Showtime because both are known for making action-packed fights that generally end in a TKO. Tszyu is pictured (below) en route to a seventh-round TKO victory in his first bout with Sharmba Mitchell, while Hatton sprints to a neutral corner after decking Dennis Pedersen (right) in an April 2004 bout that resulted in a sixth-round TKO in the Brit's favor.

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

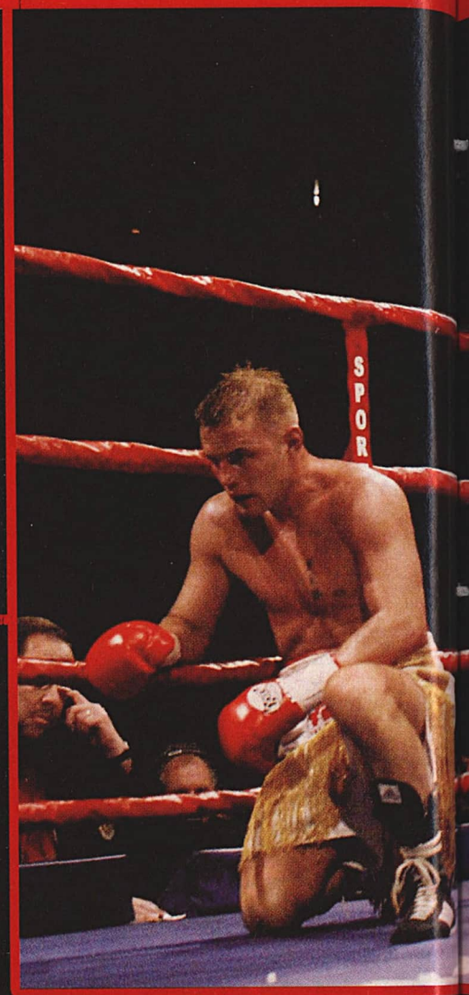


PHOTO BY JOHN GIGHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

WILL HATTON'S GAMBLE AGAINST TSZYU BACKFIRE?

By Paul Salgado

The young lion versus the aging legend endures as one of the most important rites of passage in boxing. It is as an archetype of the game and a stark reminder that the sport, at its very essence, is grounded in Darwinian law: To broach immortality, an eager young fighter must first devour a recognized immortal.

There are countless examples, from Rocky Marciano's heartbreaking knockout of the legendary Joe Louis, to Oscar De La Hoya's four-round bloodletting against Julio Cesar Chavez, that can be cited as a critical moment in a fighter's ascent to boxing's farthest reaches.

More than anyone, England's Ricky Hatton believes greatness for him has been preordained. And for over a year now, he has been ready to prove it to the point of exacerbation. After applying strenuous pressure on a reluctant Frank Warren—even, according to the BBC, going so far as to threaten to leave the promoter—the 25-year-old Hatton finally got his wish when a deal was cemented that will see him try for the junior welterweight champi-

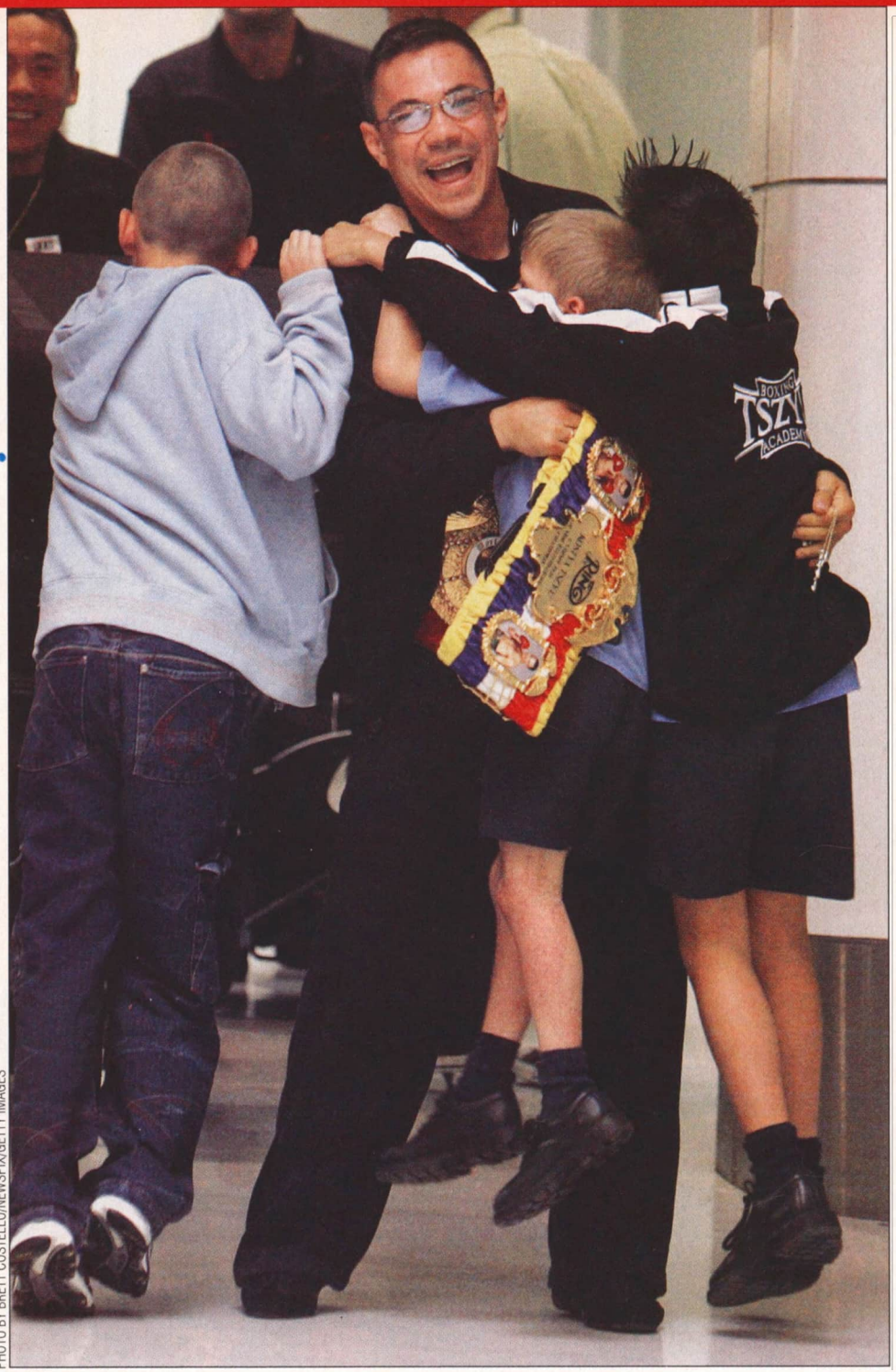


PHOTO BY BRETT COSTELLO/NEWSPIX/GETTY IMAGES

Tszyu is greeted by his children upon his return to Australia following his emphatic victory over Mitchell in their November 2004 rematch. Many experts picked Mitchell to take the title because of injuries Tszyu had suffered in recent years, but the champion looked sensational in easily overpowering the number-one contender.

onship the first weekend in June in his hometown of Manchester against one of the sport's elder statesmen and most accomplished fighters, Kostya Tszyu.

In securing the fight, Hatton, 38-0 (28), has performed the equivalent of a poker player pushing his stake to the center of the table and wagering it all on one hand. A win against Tszyu will vault him to the very top of a talent-rich division, guaranteeing him untold fortunes, not to mention exhilarating fights for the fans. But the notoriously protected Hatton also runs the risk of exposure if his skills prove woefully unequal to Tszyu's exquisite talent.

At age 35, Tszyu, 31-1 (25) with 1 no-contest, may be embarking on the final stretch of his career, but he remains one of the game's most fearsome practitioners. Experts were shocked to discover this last November when Tszyu, beleaguered by injuries to his Achilles tendon and left shoulder that kept him inactive for 22 months, comprehensively dismantled Sharmba Mitchell in a rematch many were touting him to lose. It proved to be the finest performance in years for the returning Tszyu. And pundits quickly moved to give him a respectful place on their pound-for-pound lists, including THE RING, which tabs him as the third best all-around fighter in the game today.

USA Today boxing writer Dan Rafael believes Tszyu's virtuoso display against Mitchell proves he remains the most dangerous fighter in the deep junior welterweight class. Considering that the division currently boasts Arturo Gatti, Floyd Mayweather, Vivian Harris, and Miguel Cotto, that's no small platitude. Like most, Rafael had been keenly watching Tszyu to see if there was any sign of slippage in the veteran's abilities.

"Based on the fight with Mitchell, I would say definitely not," concluded Rafael. "Like many of the media, I picked Mitchell to win. He had been active, he had been fighting good guys. Tszyu had been out of the ring—and not like Felix Trinidad, who had decided to take a break. He was out because he had two major injuries. And at that age, you're not necessarily surprised to see him win the fight, but it was how he just ravaged Mitchell and won so easily. So based on that, there was no slipping at all."

Hatton's situation has been anything but typical in a game where economics reflect its current marginalization from the mainstream. There are only a handful of fighters, current champions included, who can routinely command more than 10,000

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

There has been a lot of carping about the quality of opposition the undefeated Hatton has faced, but virtually everybody was impressed with his 12-round decision over tough African Ben Tackie in December 2003. Hatton showed more boxing skill in that fight than he typically does.

fans at the live gate. Hatton, who attracted 12,000 to the ExCel Arena in London to witness his recent 10th-round TKO of trialhorse Ray Oliveira is one of them. In fact, all 22,000 tickets for Hatton's showdown with Tszyu at Manchester's MEN arena were sold in seven hours.

Hatton's celebrity is a well-oiled apparatus that churns money, so there is little wonder that Warren, the cagey businessman, was less than enthusiastic about a fight with Tszyu. Still, Hatton, to his credit, has chosen to let fortune yield to fate before the moment passes him by altogether.

"I actually think that, though he's young, Hatton was starting to go a little bit stale in the last year because he was dejected," observed Rafael. "Frank was talking a big game, saying: 'We're going to get Kelson Pinto,' or they were talking about Sharmba Mitchell. But whoever it was, they wind up fighting Mike Stewart or some other guy who was not in that league. So that can really wear on you mentally and not make you 100 percent focused on your fights."

Tszyu unapologetically demanded in the neighborhood of $4.5-million to cinch the deal, and allowed himself to be lured into Manchester's hostile environs, where the bout is expected to start as late as 2 a.m. to accommodate Showtime's American viewing audience. In courting the windfall, Tszyu had his own rationale. After the Mitchell bout, Tszyu disclosed that he had gone into the match nursing bruised ribs sustained during sparring. Aware that the aging process is threatening to wreak additional havoc, Tszyu was understandably lobbying for the kind of money that only a fight with Oscar De La Hoya could bring before Warren finalized his bid. A victory over the unproven Hatton may not go further to cement Tszyu's brilliance, but the purse was a small fortune and the surest money out there.

Although HBO color analyst Larry Merchant praises Hatton as a "British, exciting version of Gatti," Hatton's lack of high-level fights stands him in stark contrast to the rest of the division's best fighters. And the contrast is most striking when he is paired up against Tszyu. Hatton showed remarkable speed and slick boxing skills in putting on a career-best performance against a still-useful Ben Tackie. But 12 rounds against the utterly deteriorated Vince Phillips, distinguished for his inspired upset of Tszyu in '97, proved a pointless, one-sided exercise in brutality.

The more dangerous Tackie was rendered impotent against Tszyu in '02, while the lesson against Phillips eight years ago served as a watermark that made him a more disciplined fighter. And while Hatton's amateur background was negligible, Tszyu's extended career in the unpaid ranks prepared him for a professional foray that was explosive. The IBF junior welterweight titleholder by his 14th fight, Tszyu had already faced a former world champion in Juan LaPorte in only his fourth pro outing.

PHOTO BY TATYANA MAKEYEVA/GETTY IMAGES

Tszyu's international celebrity status soared following his second win over Mitchell. The hoopla included a visit to his homeland, where he was welcomed by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

If Hatton's bloated record and restrained progress calls his true ability into question, Tszyu's short career emphasizes his composition as pure championship material. Since 1995, Tszyu has only had two non-title contests (plus two for interim titles), meaning he has engaged in title bouts against quality fighters almost exclusively for the last 10 years, a full three years longer than Hatton has been active as a pro.

Given his lack of big-fight exposure, the biggest question surrounding Hatton is whether he will be ready to meet the complex challenges Tszyu will inevitably present. Although it's a formidable task, Merchant believes Hatton has a made the right choice to take on Tszyu given his enormous popularity.

"I think it's time to make the jump," said Merchant. "Whether or not he could have profited from facing more serious competition? The answer is, probably. But then it comes down to a business decision or how much they want to risk before he gets his big chance. You could say that the protection has helped him to build a reputation that gives him an unusual opportunity to fight for a world title in his hometown. It doesn't necessarily mean he's going to win, as we saw with Cory Spinks and Zab Judah. But yeah, you usually like to see the young guy get tested before he goes to the big dance. There's an argument against, as well as for it."

Emanuel Steward, the legendary trainer who currently trains Harris, designed the strategy of throwing endless right hands that helped Phillips prevail over Tszyu. He agrees that big-fight experience might have helped Hatton, but there are other factors that he believes should be given greater weight.

"Maybe Hatton hasn't fought the top-notch boys," said Steward. "But I would not be surprised to see Ricky Hatton beat Kostya Tszyu. He fights with intensity, and also I like the fact that he's improved. His punches are a lot shorter and his reflexes are a lot better than they used to be. And that goes with activity. I don't see the fight like everybody else as a mismatch."

Lack of exposure to the diverse styles and tactics only learned in facing skilled veterans may handicap Hatton, suggested former junior lightweight titleholder Jesse James Leija, who lost a six-round pitched battle with Tszyu in '03 after a punctured eardrum forced a stoppage. Leija also said he thought that Hatton will encounter considerable pressure fighting as an underdog for the first time before his Manchester audience. The enormous weight of expectation from the home crowd could distract Hatton from the concentration he'll need to defeat someone of Tszyu's caliber.

"Kostya has everything—power, speed, and he's smart in the ring," said Leija. "He doesn't get hit a lot, and he has a lot of patience. He makes you pay for mistakes. Ricky will be amazed that he's never even fought a guy half as good as him. When he's in the ring, he's going to realize he's out of his league. I think Hatton's only chance of winning this fight is catching Tszyu with a great bodyshot. That's his only chance. Outpunching him? It will be hard to outpunch Kostya when you're getting hit by him coming in."

With so many intangibles, the fight comes down to a question of execution, which is the methodical Tszyu's forte. He throws every manner of combination with enviable precision, and each punch by Tszyu is designed to break down his opponents until the cumulative effect destroys their resistance. Knockouts for Tszyu are not forced, but usually come as a matter of course. In fact, if he has any one flaw, it may be that he is too cerebral in the ring,

PHOTO BY GARY M. PRIOR/GETTY IMAGES

Hatton has toiled long and hard to get to a point where a match against junior welterweight champion Tszyu could be made. Even though he's the biggest ticket-seller in Great Britain and can make plenty of money without fighting Tszyu, Hatton virtually forced his promoter to make the match.

which may work to Hatton's advantage.

A volume puncher, Hatton often dispatches his opponents by the sheer overwhelming nature of his attack. But, as Steward points out, his industriousness is augmented by unusual strength. A weakened foe will oftentimes find Hatton utilizing girth to muscle them to the ropes, where his hellacious left hook to the body becomes a primary weapon.

"Hatton is the perfect guy to cause problems for Kostya Tszyu," said Steward in analyzing Hatton's chances. "I think that Hatton will be able to do what he wants to do, which is to make Kostya fight at a faster tempo. Kostya likes to pull back and put himself into a zone where he can think and analyze and control you with a pawing-type jab and accurate pinpoint right hand. And if you can avoid Tszyu's right hand and make him fight a faster pace, you can win. I believe Hatton has the ability to do that."

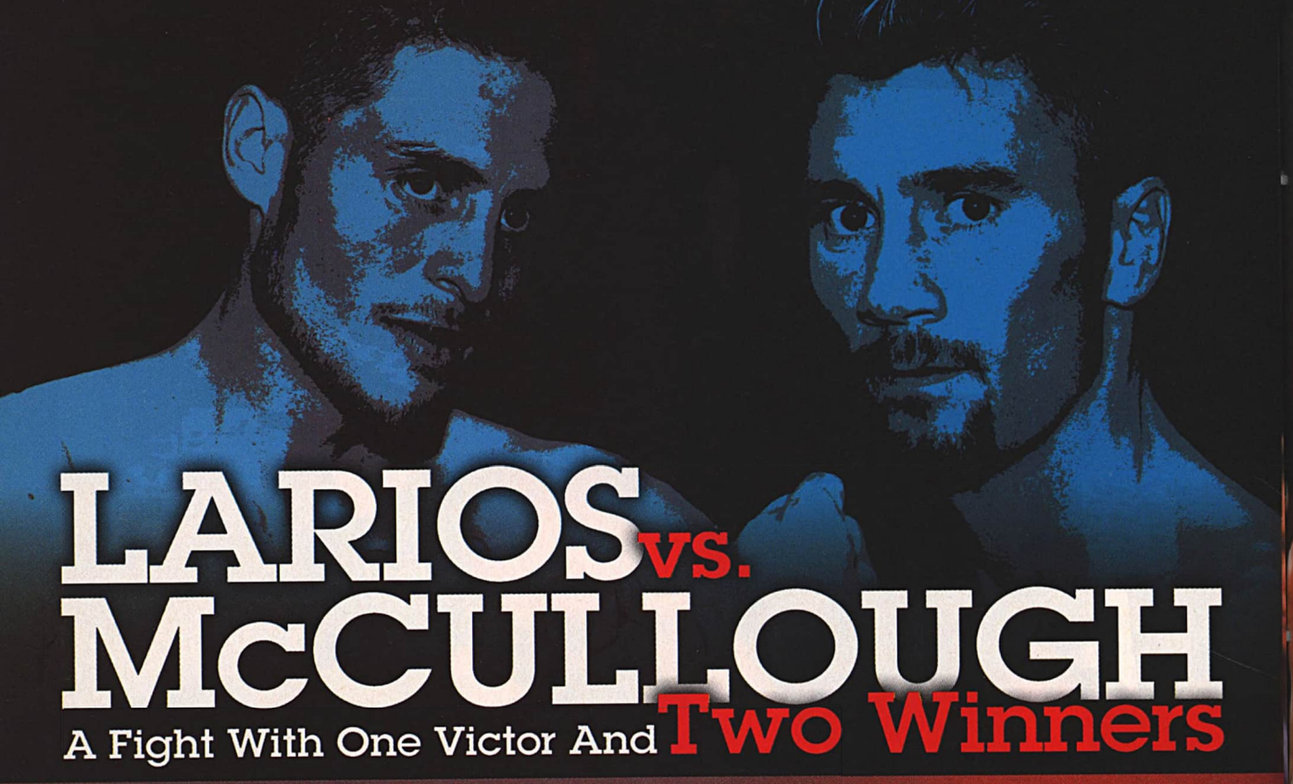
If for no other reason, Tszyu was installed as an early 3-1 favorite because the smart money initially follows the fighter with the proven pedigree. Great champions are hard to bet against, but it's hardly a case of Tszyu being a sentimental favorite. As Rafael points out, Tszyu currently presides as a rare breed that is already destined for Canastota while still actively campaigning as a preeminent threat to his contemporaries. With the exception of Bernard Hopkins, there is no dominant champion fighting that has so little left to prove.

In other words, Hatton may be gunning for destiny, but he is up against history.

"I think anybody who goes in to challenge for a title against a future Hall of Famer who's been looking spectacular, you better bring your A-game," said Rafael. "Tszyu is very smart. He's been in with every kind of style imaginable, and Ricky Hatton is not going to show him anything he hasn't seen before. Kostya can win by knockout or he can outbox a guy for 12 rounds. Ricky Hatton? I don't know if he can outbox Kostya Tszyu for 12 rounds. He may be able to outbox a lesser guy who's looking to survive, but outboxing Tszyu is a very difficult proposition."

In assessing the daunting task ahead for Hatton, Merchant agrees: "I think Tszyu is one of the top fighters ever in the history of the division. And you don't ever pick against a guy like that against somebody who has never fought at the elite level. I couldn't pick against Tszyu. In the end, the burden of proof is on Hatton." ■

Paul Salgado is a Toronto-based freelance writer and an occasional contributor to this magazine.



LARIOS vs. McCULLOUGH

A Fight With One Victor And Two Winners

Larios-McCullough was a brutal give-and-take affair in which the punches never stopped flying. Even though Larios won the decision, McCullough claimed a moral victory with his inspired effort en route to the debatable defeat.

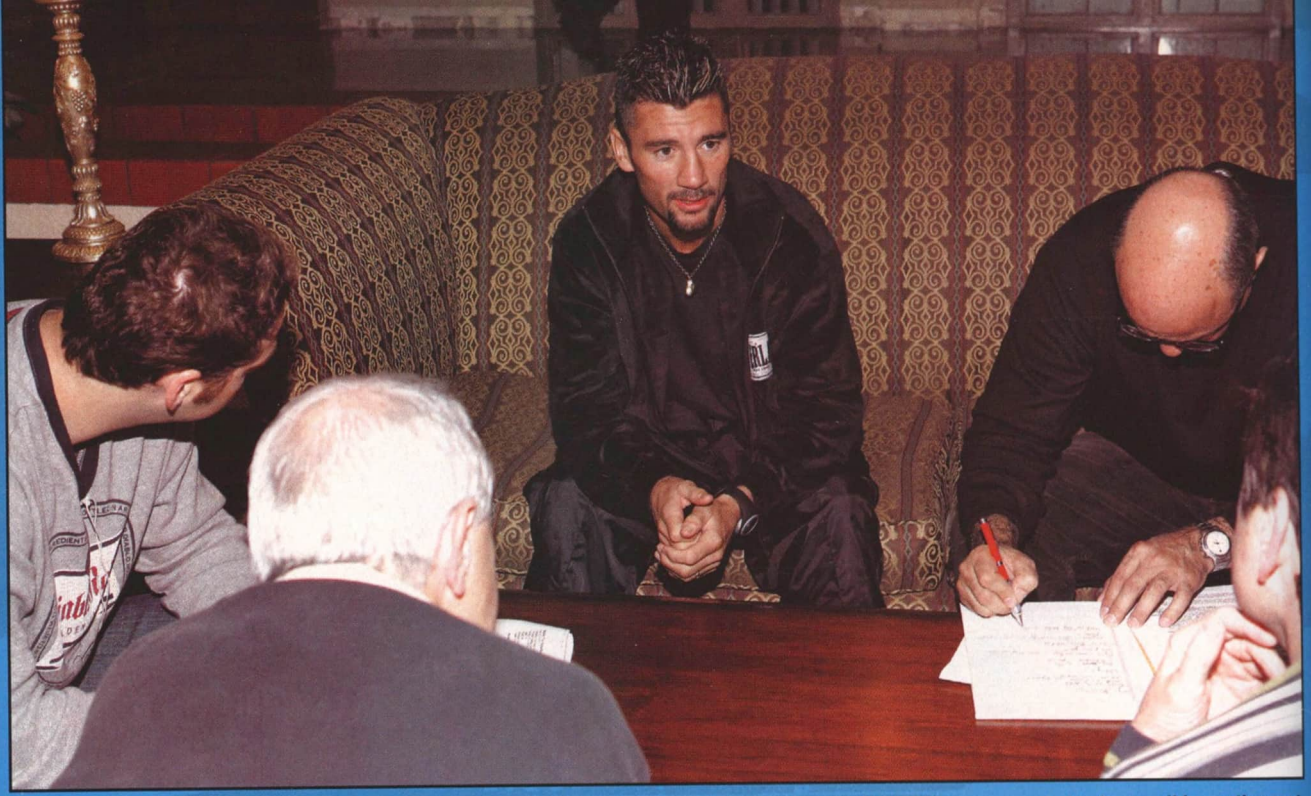
By Don Stradley
PHOTOS BY JAN SANDERS

Wayne McCullough used to fight with enough energy to light up a small city. Those days may be gone, but we learned on February 10 that McCullough can still light up a boxing ring, even though he lost in his bid to unseat WBC super bantamweight boss Oscar Larios. McCullough's wife, Cheryl, feels her husband achieved more in defeat than Larios did in victory.

"He showed he's ready to mix with any of the big boys," said Cheryl, who also manages her husband. "Larios needed Wayne to make a name for himself. But he didn't win convincingly. If Larios wants to fight Wayne again, that would be fine. But we won't wait around for it. We'll move on. Wayne is the one people are talking about now."

Cheryl was so impressed by Wayne's performance at The Palace Indian Gaming Center that she's already eyeing alphabet titlists Mahyar Monshipour and Israel Vazquez as future opponents. McCullough, a former bantamweight titlist himself, enjoyed the attention that came his way after the Larios fight. "This was supposed to be my last hurrah, but I'm back on the map," the 34-year-old McCullough said.

All of this talk regarding the future must be refreshing for the McCulloughs. In 2000, doctors discovered a cyst on the fighter's brain that nearly ended his career. McCullough gradually re-entered the sport after 10 neurosurgeons had cleared him, but in 2003 he endured a one-sided points loss to featherweight Scott Harrison.



McCullough, a boxing writer himself on the side, speaks with a group of writers the day before the fight. This was expected to be possibly a retirement-inducing spanking for "The Pocket Rocket," but he surprised the experts and revived his career against Larios.

McCullough insisted the loss to Harrison was simply a bad night, but most people thought "The Pocket Rocket" was finished.

"I prayed to God every day," said McCullough. "Fortunately, my wife supported me 100 percent."

McCullough believes his training regimen kept him from considering retirement. "If you even think about retiring, you may as well just quit. But I trained every morning and at night, to keep myself busy."

McCullough, 27-5 (18), also kept busy by becoming a ringside reporter, at first for various Internet sites and then for THE RING. Ironically, one of McCullough's assignments for THE RING was to cover Larios' previous fight, a 12-round decision win over Nedal Hussein. McCullough liked his chances after seeing Larios up close. As for Larios, he hasn't done much writing, but the story he's been telling with his fists has been a dramatic one, full of triumph and frustration.

The 28-year-old native of Zapopan, Jalisco, Mexico, turned pro in 1994 after compiling an amateur record of 30-4. As a teen, Larios had watched his father, Teodoro, fight briefly as a professional. His dad even won something called the Jalisco State title. Picking up where his father left off, Larios notched 20 consecutive wins before running into a rough patch—a knockout loss to Israel Vazquez in 1997, and a loss on cuts to Agapito Sanchez in 1998. Dismissing both losses as flukes, Larios went on to win the Mexican super bantamweight title and defended it eight times before an upset win over former beltholder Cesar Soto earned him a shot at then-WBC titlist Willie Jorrin.

But more frustration followed. In January 2001, Larios was on the wrong end of a highly controversial decision to Jorrin in the titlist's hometown of Sacramento, California. Once again, Larios bounced back from disappointment. In May '02, he avenged his loss to Vazquez by stopping him in 12 hellacious rounds. Six months later, he gave Jorrin some payback, too, returning to Sacramento and stopping him in one round to win the title that had eluded him the first time.

Larios headlined HBO Latino's *Boxeo De Oro* debut in January of 2003 with a non-title decision win over Marcos Licona. But just as Larios' reputation was gaining steam, he spent the next several months fighting obscure opponents, including a surprisingly tough fight in Tokyo against Shigeru Nakazato that saw him win a 12-round decision but suffer a broken jaw. Then came wins over Kozo Ishii (KO 2), Napapol Kiatisakchokchai (KO 10), Nakazato again (W 12), Jesus Perez (W 10), Ivan Alvarez (W 10), and Hussein.

Like many fighters his age, Larios, the father of four daughters, wants to make some fast money and retire early. "I want to get out and spend time with my family and make up for lost time that I have missed with them when I'm training," Larios said last year.

While a rubber match with Vazquez might decide THE RING's champion at junior feather, Larios, 55-3-1 (35), admits to being bored with the 122-pound class. He wants to fight the marquee names at higher weights, including Marco Antonio Barrera and Manny Pacquiao. But Larios' promoters aren't sure what his next step will be.

"We have an agreement in place to fight Joan Guzman," said Eric Gomez, vice president of Golden Boy Promotions. "But Guzman is in the middle of contractual problems. Oscar has said he would consider fighting McCullough again in the meantime." Gomez would like Larios to fight on an HBO pay-per-view show, perhaps as part of a co-main event with Barrera headlining.

"He's one or two fights away from being the next bright star out of Mexico," said Gomez. The Golden Boy himself, Oscar De La Hoya, thinks Larios will soon be fighting in major events.

"He's willing to fight anybody," said

De La Hoya. "He's successfully defended his WBC title many times (six, to be precise), and he's a kid that's going to grow possibly into a junior lightweight. He's a very exciting fighter. He's kind of a throwback to those Mexican fighters that we used to see at the Olympic Auditorium."

But not everyone is sold on Larios.

"What you see is what you get," said Telefutura commentator Bernardo Osuna, who feels Larios peaked three or four years ago. "Larios isn't a young pup. Golden Boy talks about him like a prospect, but can you say a guy with nearly 60 fights has potential? I like him, but it's hard to see him as the torchbearer for Mexican fighters. He's actually more popular in Japan because he fought there so many times. Even among Mexican fans, his name doesn't immediately come to mind."

Larios and McCullough made an odd couple when they clashed in Lemoore, California. McCullough is short and compact, his rugged features set in a look of perpetual worry. Larios is tall and angular. He sometimes wears a droopy mustache that makes him look like a 1970s porno king. Sometimes he breaks into a nervous grin when he fights, as if boxing were some kind of naughty fun. The pattern of the fight was set immediately with Larios jabbing, hooking, and moving while McCullough tried to get close and do his own damage.

"Larios is known for making exciting fights," said Gomez. "He expressed to us that he was disappointed by the Hussein fight in Las Vegas. He felt Hussein's power that night so he boxed carefully. He won but felt he let his fans down. He asked us for a Wayne McCullough type of fighter, someone who could bring out the best in him."

But you should be careful of what you wish for. For six rounds, the action was give-and-take. McCullough thrived on the hot pace. "I could hear Larios' frustration as he made noises every time I hit him in the body," said McCullough.

Larios hurt McCullough early in the seventh, but all wasn't well for "Chololo." He was bleeding from a cut over his left eye, and his right arm was stiffening up on him. He barely used his right hand in the eighth, allowing McCullough to outhustle him. But during rounds nine and 10, Larios became more aggressive, staggering McCullough more than once. With his back to the ropes, a groggy McCullough threw arm-weary punches the way a sleepwalker would fend off an opponent in a dream; Larios, ignoring the pain in his arm, landed a roundhouse right just before the bell that stunned McCullough.

"I gave away most of the middle rounds," said McCullough, who by now was being told by trainer Freddie Roach that he needed a knockout to win. "I think my inactivity could have been the factor, allowing Larios to pick up those rounds on the scorecards. He also hit me low at least

McCullough lands a left to the body in the early stages of the fight. Knowing Larios can be a slow starter, McCullough jumped on him with a busy attack from the outset.

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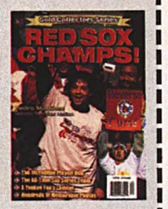

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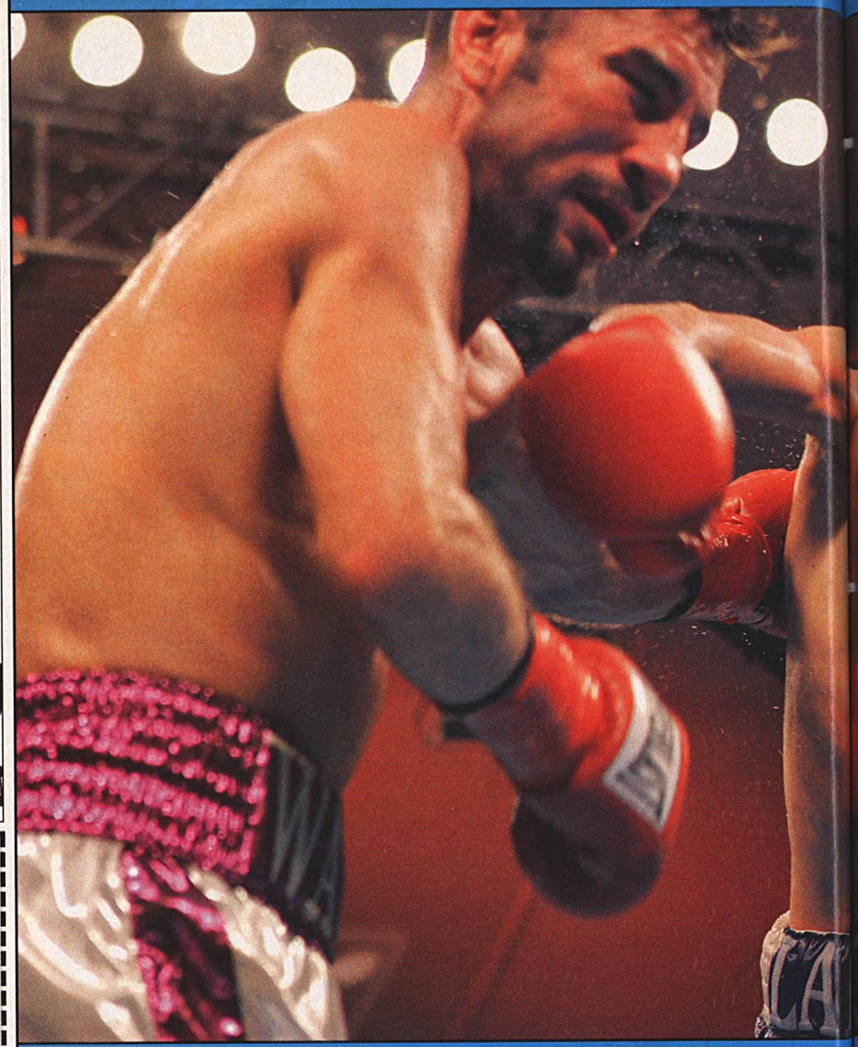
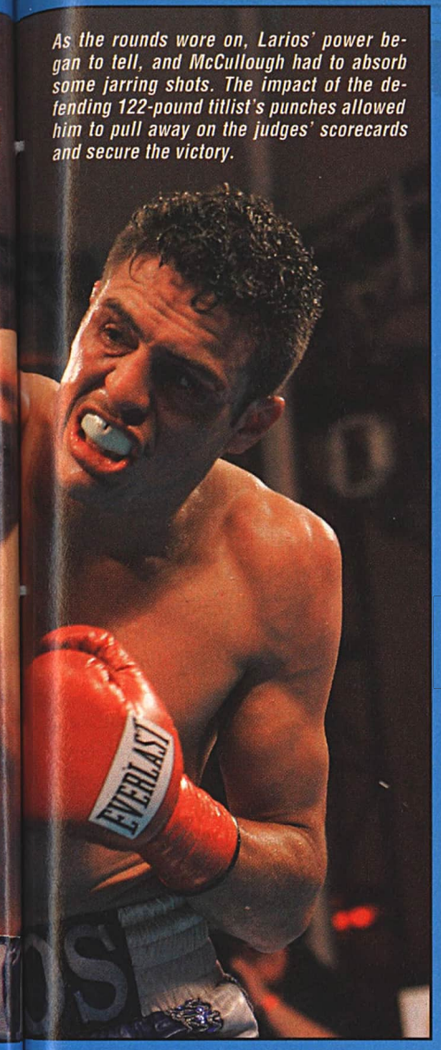




As the rounds wore on, Larios' power began to tell, and McCullough had to absorb some jarring shots. The impact of the defending 122-pound titlist's punches allowed him to pull away on the judges' scorecards and secure the victory.

The thrill and the agony: The moods were quite different for Larios (above) and McCullough (below) after the decision was read. Larios would like to move on now to major fights at higher weights, but a rematch with the game Irish veteran seems more likely.

seven or eight times, but only got one warning. He was quite dirty, but I tried not to complain and just get on with the fighting."

Larios controlled round 11, but the Belfast native came out strong for the 12th, pursuing Larios and landing several clean shots. When the final bell sounded, McCullough was exhausted, but felt he had won a close fight.

Then he heard the scores. Judges Marty Sammon, Marco Rosales, and Kozio Abe favored Larios by a landslide, turning in scores of 118-109, 118-110, and 116-111, respectively. THE RING's score was 114-114.

"When it's a close fight and you hear the scoring like that, it hurts," said McCullough, who was aghast at the scorecards when he saw them later. "One of the judges gave me a round I totally lost. They were blind."

The spectators were accepting of the decision, probably because Larios landed the harder shots. Another problem could be that McCullough's sturdy chin is also a curse. Until he realizes judges don't award points for taking direct hits on the face, he'll continue to be baffled by their scorecards.

The fight was televised on Fox Sports Net as part of *The Best Damn Sports Show Period's* recent boxing series, and everyone involved had to be happy. McCullough earned his way back into THE RING's ratings, and Larios added another entertaining fight to his resume. But his story of triumph and frustration continues; the arm trouble turned out to be a torn right biceps. One week after the fight, he underwent surgery that could take up to three months to heal. Also, some were disappointed that he didn't look better against the aging McCullough.

"He should have taken McCullough out," said Osuna. "That's why McCullough was there, to be beaten."

So maybe Larios isn't another Barrera. Maybe he's another Yory Boy Campas, a likable guy who provides action. You can never have too many of those in the sport.

According to McCullough, Larios' manager, Rafael Mendoza, visited his dressing room after the fight and said there would definitely be a sequel. While McCullough would love another chance at Larios, he's never received a rematch in the past, and he doesn't think Larios wants any more of him.

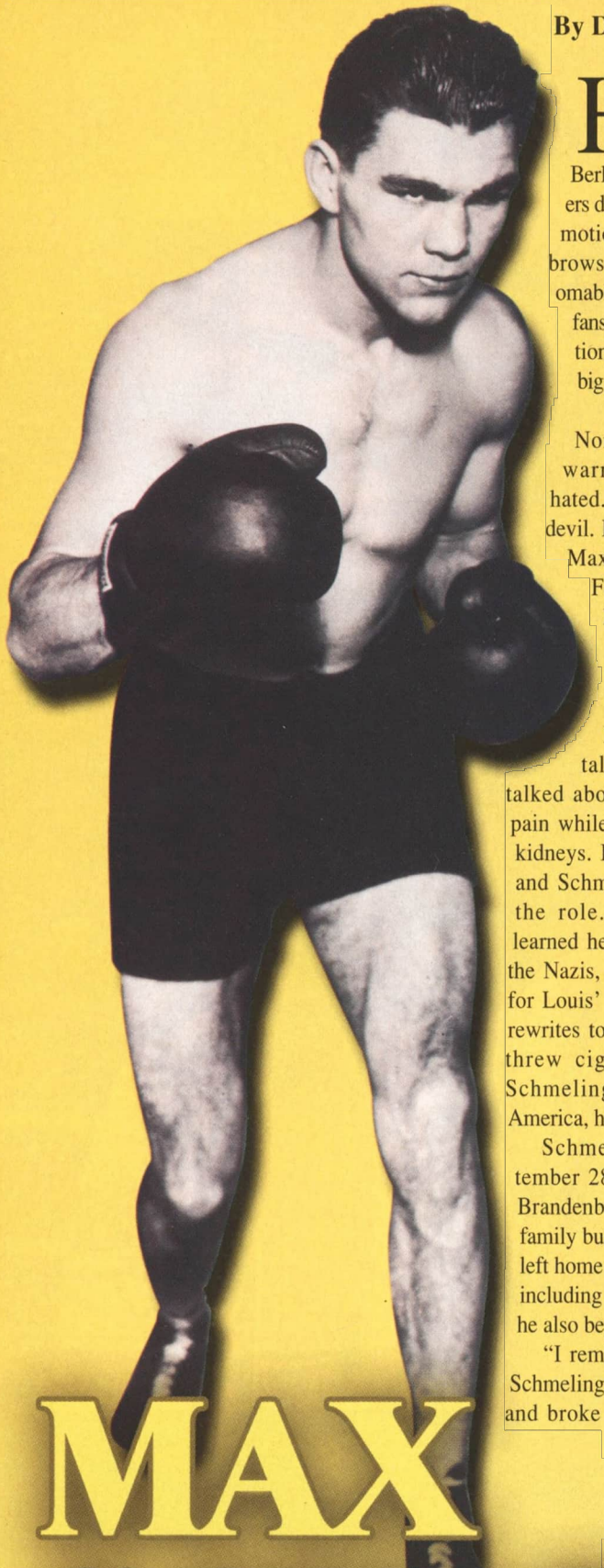
"He probably thinks I'm too tough," McCullough said from his home in Las Vegas. "But I'll tell you, of all the champions I've fought, Larios was the nicest guy. If he gives me a rematch, I'll respect him even more. I believe I deserve it."

Rematches rarely equal the intensity of the original encounter, but Larios and McCullough are two fighters who might recreate the sparks we saw in February. Maybe McCullough will be better with a tuneup or two; maybe Larios will be better with two healthy arms. Hopefully, the next group of judges will notice McCullough's efforts as much as Larios' haymakers. It's the inconsistency of judges that makes Cheryl McCullough unlikely to manage anyone else but her husband.

"He's my one and only," she said. "I wouldn't go through this with another fighter. It's such a sneaky business, with a lot of wrong decisions. When he does retire, I'm retiring with him."

We hope that day won't come before we see Larios-McCullough, Part Two. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Rockport, Massachusetts, and a regular contributor to this magazine.



MAX SCHMELING: 1905-2005

By Don Stradley

His name made you think of old newsreel footage, massive parades in Berlin and Hamburg, and fighters dropping to the canvas in slow motion. He had enormous eyebrows that framed tiny, unfathomable eyes. To German boxing fans, he was a titan. To a generation of Americans, he was the big, bad wolf.

His life unfurled like a Norse epic. He was a brave warrior who was loved and hated. He broke bread with the devil. But nothing we write about Max Schmeling, who died in February at age 99, can do him justice. The truth is that few American fight fans ever sat in a bar debating the greatness of Max Schmeling. When we talked about him at all, we talked about the way he howled in pain while Joe Louis banged on his kidneys. But history needs villains, and Schmeling seemed perfect for the role. Years later, when we learned he was helping Jews escape the Nazis, and that he helped to pay for Louis' funeral, we did some fast rewrites to make up for the time we threw cigarette butts at him. If Schmeling held grudges against America, he kept them hidden.

Schmeling was born on September 28, 1905, in Klein-Lukow, Brandenburg. Rather than enter the family business of house painting, he left home at 16. He worked odd jobs, including a brief stint in a circus, but he also begged.

"I remember the bitterest time," Schmeling said. "I was 18 years old and broke in the city of Mullheim. When I could afford to, I slept in the basement of a building for a nickel. A rope was stretched from one wall to the other a few inches above the floor, and men laid on the floor, using the rope for a pillow."

According to various sources, Schmeling's interest in boxing peaked after seeing a movie about the sport. He made himself available as a sparring partner in the Sport Club Colonia at Mulheim, and within a year he was fighting professionally.

By 1926, Schmeling had become a German media sensation. His victory over Fernand DeLarge for the European light heavyweight title was the first fight broadcast live over German radio. After an embarrassing knockout loss to a British journeyman named Gypsy Daniels, Schmeling left the 175-pound class for the heavyweights. In 1928, he defeated Franz Diener for the German heavyweight title.

Artsy types from Berlin were attracted by Schmeling's rough charisma. They thought he represented man's primitive fury in modern dress. In 1930, he starred in a movie called *Knockout* and met a lovely film actress named Anny Ondra. They married in 1932 but kept it a secret at first because she was older than him. It was also around this time that Schmeling first attracted the attention of the National Socialist Party. Neither the artists nor the Nazis cared much about boxing, but Schmeling was a convenient mascot. He thought nothing of accepting an invitation to have lunch with Adolph Hitler, a move that brought him some bad press in the U.S.

"It's normal for the head of state to have a reception for a successful athlete," said Schmeling. "I wonder, though, if [the press] mentioned how many times I turned Hitler down. Did they ever mention that I'd had dinner with President Roosevelt? That he used to come to my training camp? That I used to correspond and exchange stamps with Roosevelt and

He Overcame His Image To Become A Legend

Schmeling and his wife, actress Anny Ondra, on the set of **Knockout**, *a movie he made in Germany. The couple stayed together through good times and bad until she died in 1987.*

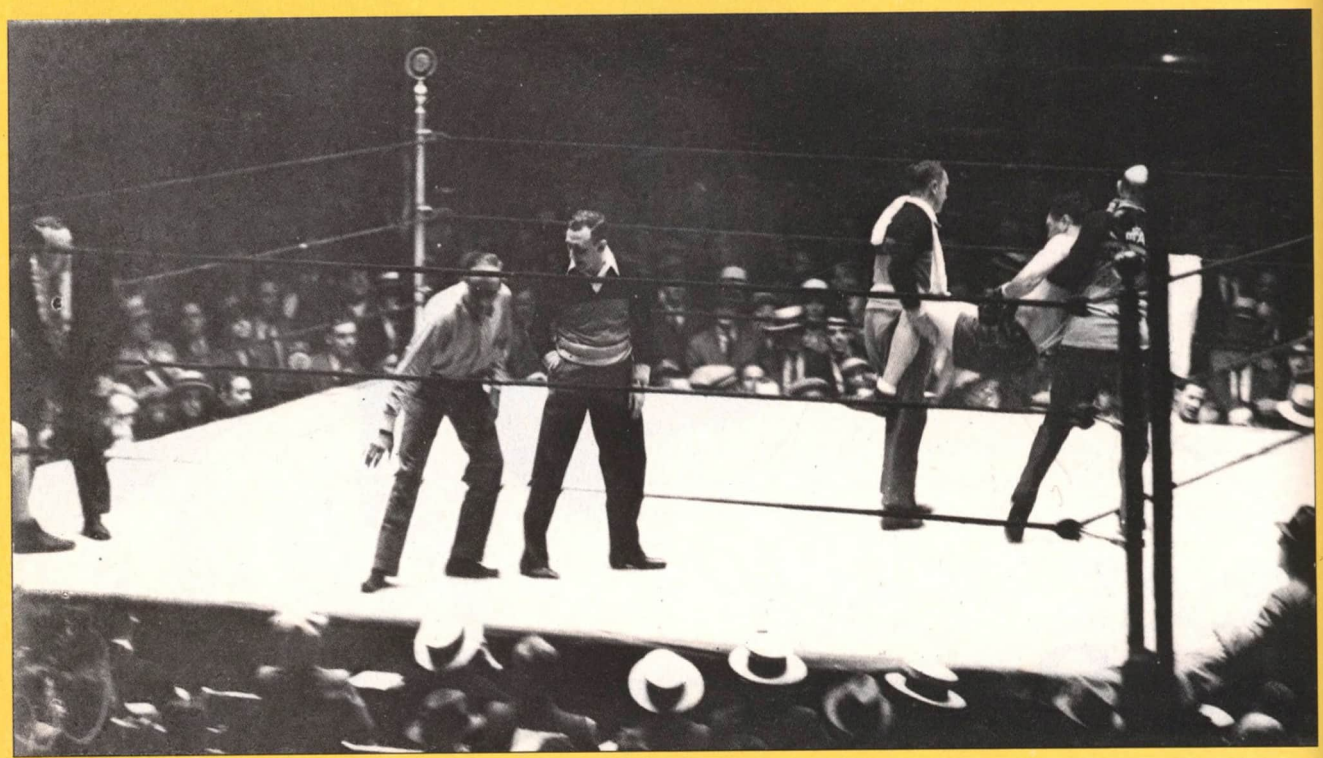
Jim Farley, his campaign manager? No, Hitler really embarrassed me and my wife."

But Schmeling's image had already taken some hits. When he fought Jack Sharkey for the vacant heavyweight title and won on a foul, newspaper cartoonists went wild. There was a cartoon of Schmeling sneaking out of America with a bag full of U.S. dollars and one with the Statue of Liberty sticking her tongue out as Max sails back to Germany.

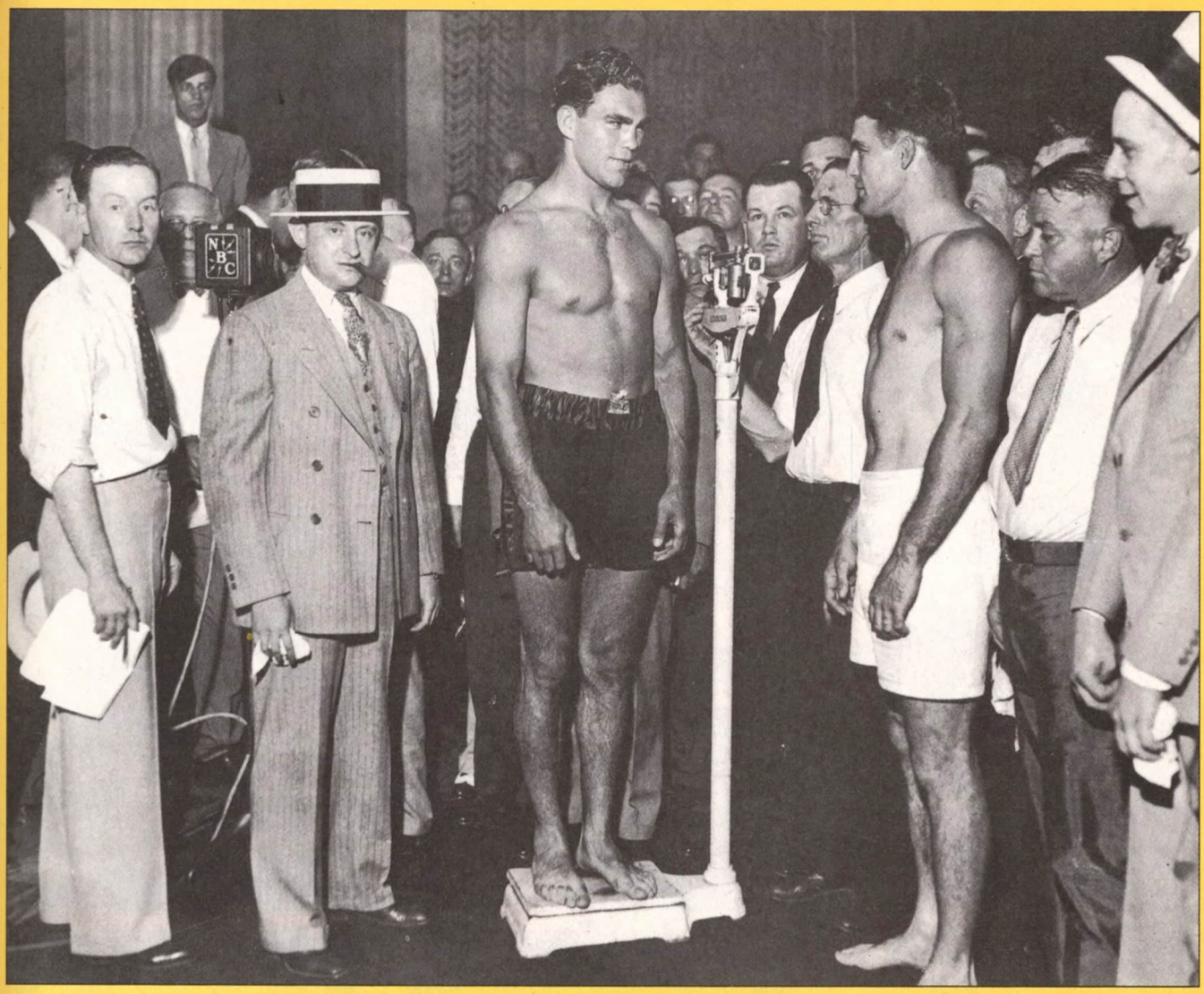
Ironically, Schmeling had been a success in New York prior to beating Sharkey. When he'd arrived in 1928, a half-dozen U.S. fight managers offered their services to him before he settled on Joe Jacobs, a cantankerous character who seemed lifted from the pages of Damon Runyon. Even THE RING's editor and founder, Nat Fleischer, offered to be Schmeling's American representative. And why not? The title was vacant, and Schmeling had a good right hand. His resemblance to Dempsey made him an easy sell, and his early New York appearances were met with wild ovations. But that was as good as it got. Winning the title on a foul made him look foolish, and led to the establishment of a rule in New York that titles couldn't change hands on fouls.

In 1932, Schmeling lost the title to Sharkey on a controversial decision, which earned him some sympathy, but he was cast as the villain again when he beat up Mickey Walker later that year. It wasn't his fault that Walker was just a blown-up welterweight, but Schmeling came off as a bully. By now his cruel image was set in stone.

When Schmeling fought Max Baer that summer, Hitler's treatment of Jews was already making headlines. Baer, wearing the Star of David on his trunks, stopped Schmeling in 10 rounds. Singer Al Jolson was at ringside, allegedly shouting, "Come on, Jewboy! Kill that Nazi!" Schmeling,



Schmeling is carted back to his corner the night he took the heavyweight away from Jack Sharkey title via fourth-round foul at Yankee Stadium. Winning the heavyweight championship in this manner hurt Schmeling's popularity in the United States.

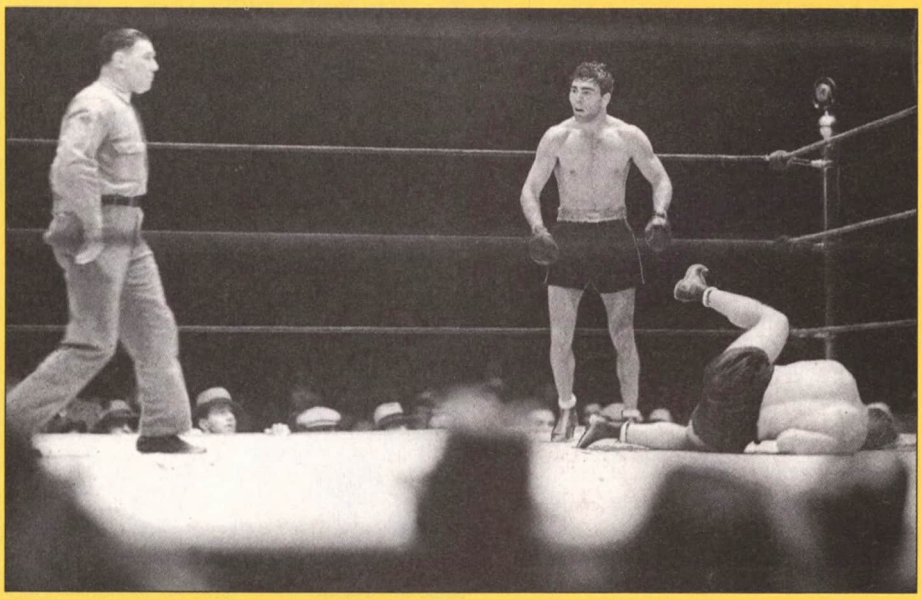


Schmeling weighs in for his only successful title defense, against Young Stribling, in July 1931. That's Schmeling's Jewish manager, Joe Jacobs, wearing a straw hat and smoking a cigar. Max stopped "The Georgia Peach" in the 15th round.

perhaps distracted by the controversies around him, followed the loss to Baer with a loss to Steve Hamas and a draw with Paulino Uzcudun.

Schmeling returned to Germany in 1934 and regrouped. He fought Walter Neusel, a German fighter who had temporarily replaced him as the country's top heavyweight. In front of 102,000 people, still a record for a European boxing event, Schmeling showed that he was still boss in the Fatherland by knocking Neusel out in nine rounds. A rematch with Hamas followed. This time Schmeling beat Hamas so badly that Hamas never fought again.

When the Hamas fight was over, Schmeling raised his arm in a Nazi salute. Schmeling was never a member of The Party, and he never spouted Nazi philosophy, but the gesture was captured on film,

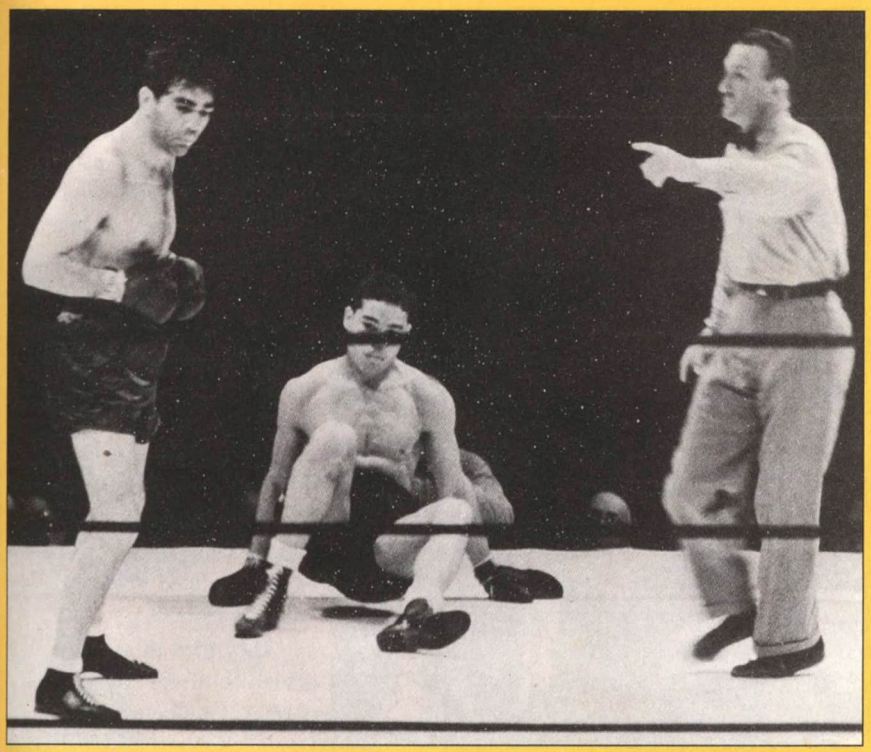


After losing a controversial decision and the heavyweight title in a rematch with Sharkey, Schmeling knocked out former welter and middleweight king Mickey Walker in the eighth round (pictured). But beating up a smaller man only enhanced Schmeling's bad-guy image in America.

Schmeling was drawn to men of power, and vice versa. He had tea with German dictator Adolph Hitler (above) on several occasions, but future U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt also visited his training camp (right) in 1932.

and probably ate at Schmeling for decades. He wasn't evil. He was just a young athlete temporarily enthralled by the bad guys. Who could blame him? A few years earlier he'd been sleeping in a damp basement with a bunch of homeless men. Poor people are often attracted to power, even if it's ugly. But it wasn't long before Schmeling lost his patience with the Nazis. They wanted him to leave his Czech wife and Jewish manager, but he refused. Legend has it that Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi Party's minister of propaganda, had eyes for Schmeling's wife, which created even more tension.

It was amid this chaos that Schmeling pulled off one of the truly great performances in boxing history, defeating Louis in 1936. He'd noticed Louis' habit of keeping his left low, which gave Schmeling a chance to land his vaunted right. By the 12th round, Louis was face down on



Schmeling's greatest night in the ring came in 1936 when he became the first to beat Joe Louis, knocking out "The Brown Bomber" in the 12th round. The German hoped his upset victory would earn him a title shot against reigning champ Jim Braddock, but Schmeling had to wait until Louis won the title.

the canvas, his head swollen grotesquely. The Nazis, who hadn't wanted Schmeling to fight a black man in the first place, now treated him like a prince.

Schmeling believed he would next fight Jimmy Braddock for the title, but promoter Mike Jacobs knew the real money would be in a Louis-Schmeling rematch. The plan was to make Schmeling wait while Louis won the title. More irony: Schmeling probably would have beaten Braddock, becoming the first man to regain the heavyweight championship. But the feeling was that Schmeling might win the belt and bring it back to Hitler. All he could do was wait.

Meanwhile, Schmeling used his clout to make Hitler promise that American athletes would compete in the 1936 Berlin Olympics without harassment. Still, American newspapers described Schmeling as Hitler's henchman. By the time Schmeling fought Louis again, in 1938, America's anti-German sentiment was at a boiling point, as was the tension between Goebbels, Schmeling, and Anny.

"Goebbels kept her in Germany as a hostage so I would not defect," Schmeling told interviewer Laurence F. McNamee in 1991. "Dempsey had always been after me to defect. My mother was also still in Germany. I was trapped. It was a very unpleasant period."

Louis won the historic rematch by stopping Schmeling in one round.

No longer of use to the Nazis, Schmeling was drafted in the paratroopers where he was injured during the invasion of Crete. While recuperating, he threatened to break Goebbels' neck if any harm came to Anny. When Goebbels ordered Schmeling to tell the American press about British war atrocities, Schmeling denied that such atrocities existed. Goebbels eventually had Schmeling court-martialed.

Schmeling returned to the ring after the war. He lost a 10-round decision to his old rival, Neusel, at age 43, but was still good enough to break the jaw of Hans Draegenstein en route to a ninth-round stoppage. He retired in 1948, posting a career record of 56-10-4 (39).

Schmeling was bigger than ever in his homeland after beating Louis. But even though he had once been sighted giving the Nazi salute, Schmeling refused to fire his Jewish manager and was never sympathetic with the Nazis' goal of world domination.

A weary, 43-year-old Schmeling leaves the ring following his final fight, a 10-round decision loss to Riedel Vogt in 1948 in Berlin. He had been fighting professionally since 1924.

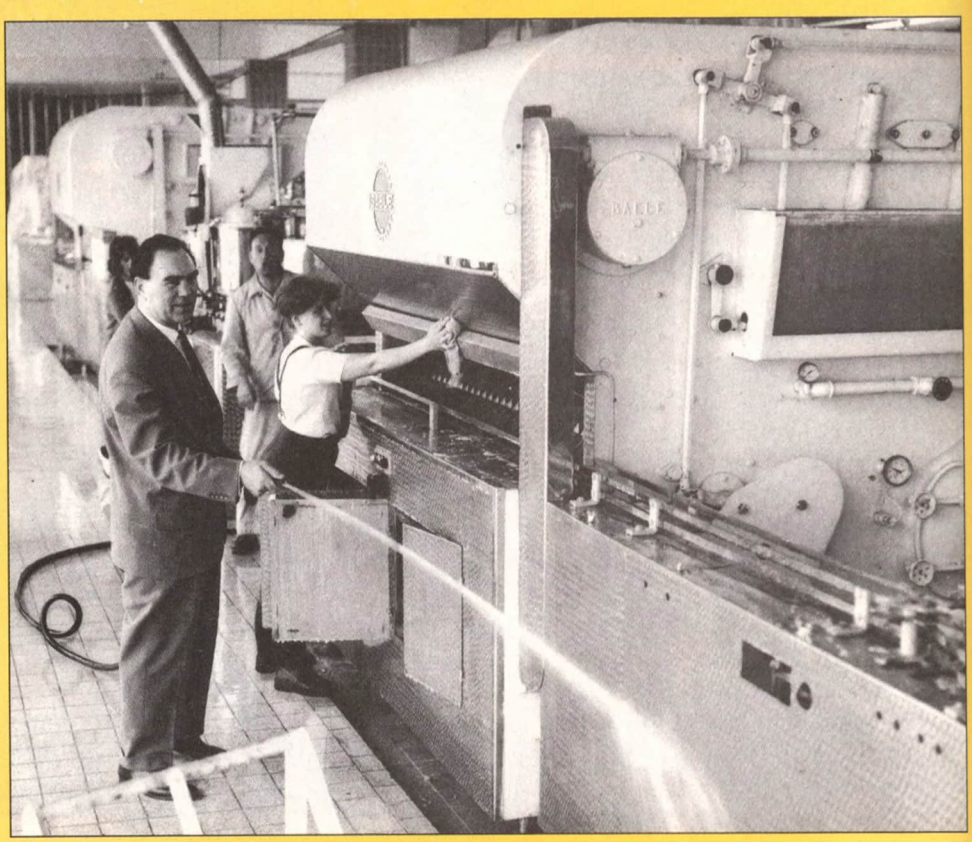
"I know a lot of businesses who want to retreat from the whole idea of sports sponsorship. When this whole thing unravels, the largest part of all sports will one day stand there naked and alone." Schmeling referred to modern athletes as "walking billboards," which depressed him. Of course, Schmeling had once been a billboard of sorts, for something far worse than Nike shoes. How many German youngsters were inspired to join the Nazis after seeing Schmeling give the famous salute? Still, Schmeling strongly refuted his association with The Party.

"They tried to use me, but I made use of the Nazis to help people. I helped many Jews. During Kristallnacht in 1938 (the night Goebbels ordered troops to storm Berlin and burn books), I took in two Jewish children of a friend, who were fleeing, for a couple of days in my apartment," Schmeling said.

After an attempt at mink farming, Schmeling bought into the Coca-Cola Company, eventually overseeing the operation of 40 German bottling factories. For a fighter who had taken his share of punishment in the ring, Schmeling was amazingly lucid and shrewd with money. He later established the Max Schmeling Foundation, which helped the poor and elderly.

Schmeling's marriage to Anny lasted until her death in 1987. Dorothea Friedrich, author of the book, *Max Schmeling And Anny Ondra*, said, "They shared each other's success and never stood in each other's way. They didn't need the public, because they had each other."

Schmeling lived his final years quietly in Hollenstedt. In one of his last interviews, he told interviewer Gunnar Meinhardt that sports had become too commercialized.



Shrewd businessman Schmeling hoses down some of the equipment at his Coca-Cola bottling plant in Hamburg. The ex-boxer eventually oversaw 40 Coke bottling factories in Germany, which made him a wealthy man.

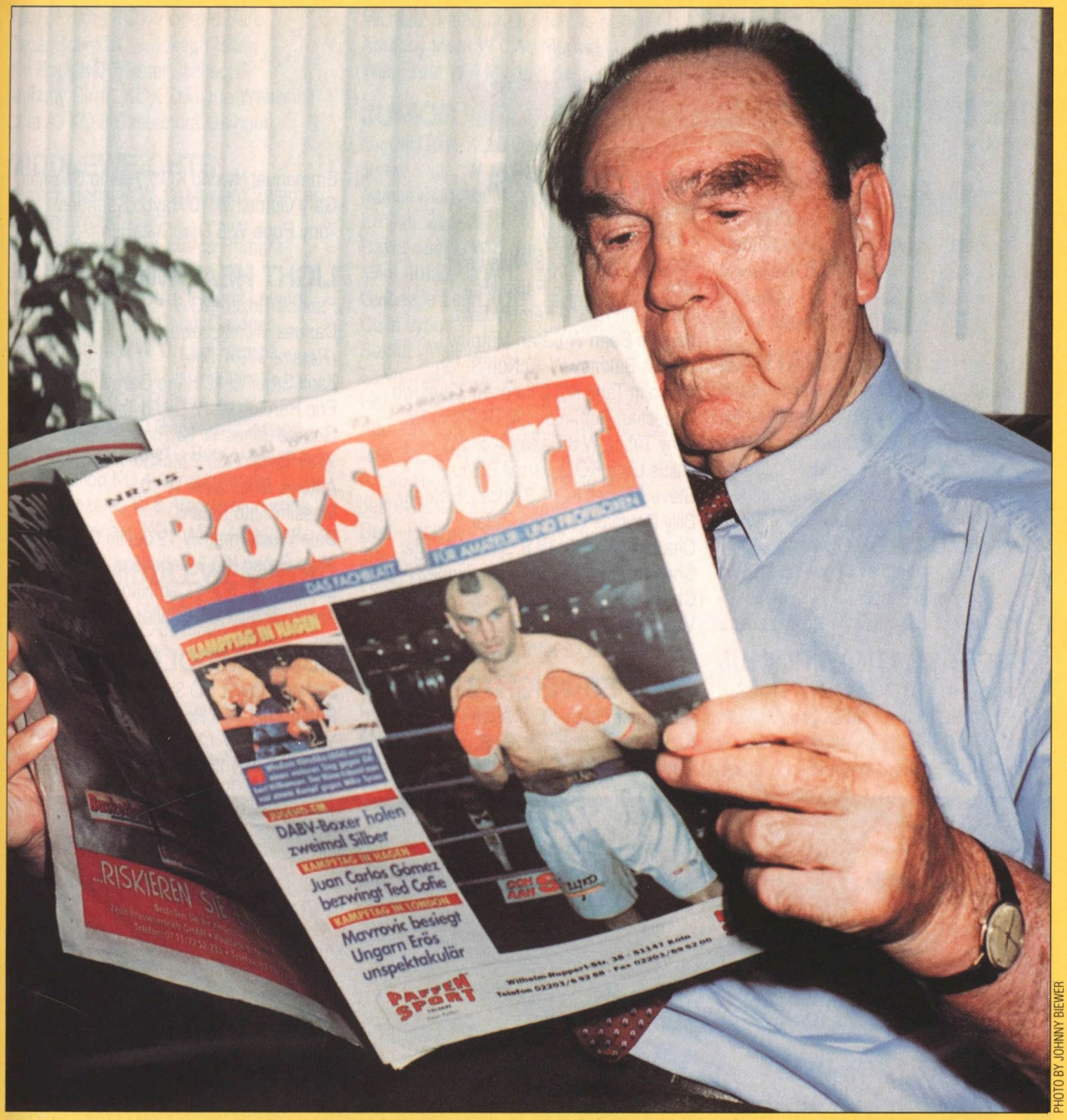


PHOTO BY JOHNNY BIEWER

Schmeling checks out a German boxing magazine in 1997. In the latter years of his life, the old warrior became something of a mentor to young Eastern European fighters, including the Klitschko brothers. He also struck up an unlikely friendship with Mike Tyson.

"The time of the Nazis was unimaginably horrible. Everything must be done to ensure that nothing sympathetic about that regime is ever said. Because there was nothing good about it."

Even though the Nazi shadow still hovered over him, Schmeling outlasted his critics and became a sort of touchstone for younger fighters.

"He had a way of staying on an opponent for the long run," said Germany's Henry Maske, the former IBF light heavyweight titleholder. "He would look into a man's eye and wear him down. He also had a fierce right hand, much better than I ever had."

Current heavyweight champ Vitali Klitschko said, "A friend and a mentor to us has died. He sent us faxes [to celebrate] victories, and comforted us in defeat. Max Schmeling showed us the way to America."

When Mike Tyson was a young champion, his managers arranged a meeting with Schmeling in Las Vegas. Tyson fawned over the old champ, and Schmeling took a liking to Tyson, vocally supporting him when Tyson was on trial in 1991. That an elderly German and a kid from Brooklyn would get along so well might have surprised some, but Tyson's mythical rise-and-fall probably sounded familiar to Schmeling.

Who knew better than Max Schmeling that a man's image is sometimes at odds with the truth? ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Rockport, Massachusetts, and a regular contributor to this magazine

SUMMARY

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Sinan Samil Sam W 12
Lawrence Clay-Bey
Nicolay Valuev KO 3 Attila Levin
Matt Skelton KO 6 Fabio Moli
Terry Smith W 10 Fernely Feliz
Vaughn Bean W 6 Ken Murphy
Dennis Bakhtov W 10 Nuri Seferi
Malcolm Tann KO 2 Innocent Otukuwu
Sebastian Rothmann W 10 Anton Nel
Tony Tubbs W 6 Danny Wofford
Julius Long KO 2 Derrell Banks
Steve Pannell KO 1 Patrice L'Heureux
Billy Douglas W 8 Rick Zufall
Chauncy Welliver W 6 Elisara Sii Uta
Chris Arreola KO 4 Sam Rodriguez
Chazz Witherspoon W 4 David Johnson
Victor Bisbal KO 1 Jose Lugo
Butterbean KO 2 Kenny Craven

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Alexander Gurov KO 1 Allan Gronfors
Krzysztof Wlodarczyk KO 8
Tefouet Dieudonne
Emmanuel Nwodo KO 7 Hilario Guzman
Gary Gomez W 10 Rayco Saunders
Tony Pope W 6 Dan Sheehan

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Fabrice Tiozzo KO 6
Dariusz Michalczewski
(Retains WBA Title)
Zsolt Erdei W 12 Hugo Garay
Eric Harding W 12 David Telesco
George Jones W 12 Thomas Reid
Vitali Tsypko KO 2 Mukadi Manda
Antonio Brancalion W 10
Massimiliano Saiani
Dale Westerman W 12 Justin Clements
Allan Green KO 3 Sebastian Hill
Lucian Bute KO 4 Carl Handy
Andre Dirrell KO 1 Walter Coles

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Jermain Taylor KO 3 Daniel Edouard
Robin Reid W 6 Ramdane Serdjane
Yusef Mack W 12 Richard Grant
Randy Griffin Tech. Win 8 Levan Easley

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Eric Harding slaps David Telesco with a jab in a battle of former light heavyweight title challengers

Henry Porras KO 4 Roberto Baro
Oscar Bravo KO 1 Joseph Brady
Jim Rock KO 7 Peter Jackson
Anthony Dirrell KO 2 Dwayne Warrens
Laila Ali KO 8 Cassandra Geigger

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Bernard Hopkins W 12 Howard Eastman
(Retains World Title)
Kingsley Ikeke KO 4 Marco Primera
Sam Soliman KO 4 Miguel Julio
Rodney Jones W Disq. 2 Rudy Lovato
Arthur Abraham W 12 Ian Gardner
Mariano Carrera W 10 Luis Parada
Satoru Suzuki W 10 Eiji Nakamura
Luis Collazo KO 1 Richard Heath
Larry Sharpe W 10 Gareth Sutherland
Cleveland Corder KO 2 Roni Martinez
Ian MacKillop KO 4 Verdell Smith
Jesus Gonzales W 8 Alberto Mercedes
Leatitia Robinson KO 1 Monica Nunez

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Joachime Alcine KO 7 Carlos Bojorquez
Shannan Taylor KO 3 Ruben Diaz
Carlos Quintana KO 4
Nurhan Suleymanoglu
Joshua Clottey No-Contest 2
Steve Martinez
Mauro Lucero KO 5 Frankie Randall
Cornelius Bundridge KO 2 Jonathan Corn
Archak Termeliksetian KO 1
Anthony Bowman
Yuri Foreman W 8 Jesus Soto
Christopher Henry KO 3 Troy Lewis
Saul Duran KO 3 Jesus Ortega
Willie Lee KO 2 Darien Ford
Ivan Robinson W 6 Tyrone Winckler
Andre Berto W 4 Daniel Neal
Rene Armijo W 4 Jesus Hernandez

WELTERWEIGHTS

Antonio Margarito KO 10 Sebastian Lujan
Michael Stewart KO 2 Corey Alarcon
Antonio Diaz W 8 Hernan Galaviz
Gilberto Reyes W 12 Bolillo Gonzalez
Marlon Thomas W 10 Hicklet Lau
Demetrius Hopkins W 8 Francisco Garcia
Ener Julio D 8 Juan Arroyo
Jackson Osei Bonsu KO 5
Mikhail Krivolapov
Golden Johnson W 12 Freddy Hernandez
Maxim Nesterenko W 10 Walter Saporiti
Michael Jennings KO 3 Vasile Dragomir
Antonio Lauri W 10 Miguel Angel Lopez
Takao Onda W 10 Teruo Nagase
Shamone Alvarez KO 4 Jose Medina
James Crayton KO 3 Steve Verdin
Michele Orlando KO 3 Tomas Kugler
Anthony Mora W 6 Art Medina
Willy Blain W 4 Michael Kelly

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Miguel Cotto KO 5 DeMarcus Corley
Junior Witter W 12 Lovemore Ndou
Muhammad Abdullaev KO 3 Juan Godoy
Ernesto Zepeda Tech. Win 9 Cesar Bazan
David Santos W 8 Ivan Alvarez
Mike Arnaoutis W 12 Roberto Santa Cruz
Giuseppe Lauri KO 3 Laszlo Komjathi
Colin Lynes W 12 Jauquin Gallardo
Samuel Malinga KO 12
Lawrence Ngobeni
Herman Ngoudjou KO 8 Eloy Rojas
Andreas Kotelnik W 8 Marcelo Saucedo
Matt Zegan W 6 Marian Leondraliu
Arturo Hernandez KO 3 David Murillo
Jeffrey Resto KO 3 Wilmer Torres
Dean Hickman W 10 Gary Reid
Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 1
Leroy Newton
Willy Blain W 4 Ivo Golakov

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Zahir Raheem KO 6 Jose Quintana
Dorin Spivey W 6 Reggie Sanders
Miguel Huerta KO 6 Jesus Santiago
Michael Katsidis KO 1 Eduardo Alvarez
Vicente Escobedo KO 2
Abraham Verdugo

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Robbie Peden KO 8 Nate Campbell
(Wins Vacant IBF Title)
Javier Alvarez KO 6 Michael Gomez
Hector Velazquez Tech. Win 6
Marcos Licona
Carlos Contreras W 10 Adan Hernandez
Ryuhei Sugita KO 6
Chondan Romayanon
Jesus Perez KO 1 Daniel Maldonado
Steve Molitor W 8 Henry Arjona

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Gary St. Clair KO 12 Shamir Reyes
Napapol Kiatisakchokchai KO 7
Jaime Barcelona
Fahprakorb Rakkiatgym KO 9
Bobby Pacquiao
Jorge Solis W 12 Hector Marquez
Stephen Foster KO 10 Livinson Ruiz
Cristobal Cruz KO 3 Luisito Espinosa
Alberto Servidei W 12 Salem Bouaita
Jason Adams W Disq. 3 Marcos Badillo
Bernard Dunne KO 5 Jim Betts
Rudy Lopez KO 4 Jesus Perez
Masaki Miya KO 3
Denthaksin Soonkilanoynai
Allen Litzau KO 3 Corey Goodwin

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Veerapol Sahaprom KO 3 Allan Fuentes
(Non-Title Bout)
Celestino Caballero W 12
Daniel Ponce DeLeon
Gabula Vabaza W 12 Roger Galicia
Masakazu Sugawara W 12 Yasuo Kunimi
Al Seeger KO 3 Carlos Zambrano
Abner Mares KO 5 Francisco Soto

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Wladimir Sidorenko W 12 Julio Zarate
(Wins Vacant WBA Title)
Jhonny Gonzalez W 12 Adonis Rivas
Malcolm Tunacao KO 9 Takafumi Himeno
Cecilio Santos W Disq. 10
Rodolfo Martinez
Tomas Rojas KO 9 Erick Sandoval
Jun Toriumi W 12 Ringo Jaguar
Jaime Ortiz W 12 Hugo Ramirez
Sasha Baktin W 10 Ryuichi Minoriyama

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Rosendo Alvarez KO 7 Regulo Gamez
Hawk Makepula W 12 Rolly Lunas
David Lookmahanak KO 4
Saman Sorjaturong
Hiroshi Nakano KO 7
Petchklongpai Thantip
Komrit Lukkuongmuekol KO 1
Cris Besmanos

FLYWEIGHTS

Denkaosaen Kaovichit KO 7
Randy Mangubat
Koki Kameda KO 1
Yodkeng Singwangcha
Everardo Morales W 12 Rafael Chavez
Diosdadi Gabi KO 1 Jimmy Pinontoan

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Ulises Solis KO 5 Jesus Martinez
Shingo Yamaguchi W 12
Munetsugo Kayo
Petchtapee Pinsinchai KO 9
Dondon Jimena
Muvhuso Nedzanani W 12 Sizwe Sinyabi
Yodsaenkeng Por Choomchok W 10
Robert Rubillar

STRAWWEIGHTS

Omar Soto W 12 Daniel Reyes
Gerardo Verde KO 8 Jose Manuel Perez
Oscar Martinez KO 8 Armando Torres
Oleydong Sithsmerchai KO 6 Rey Orais

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The RING

FIGHTER *of the* MONTH

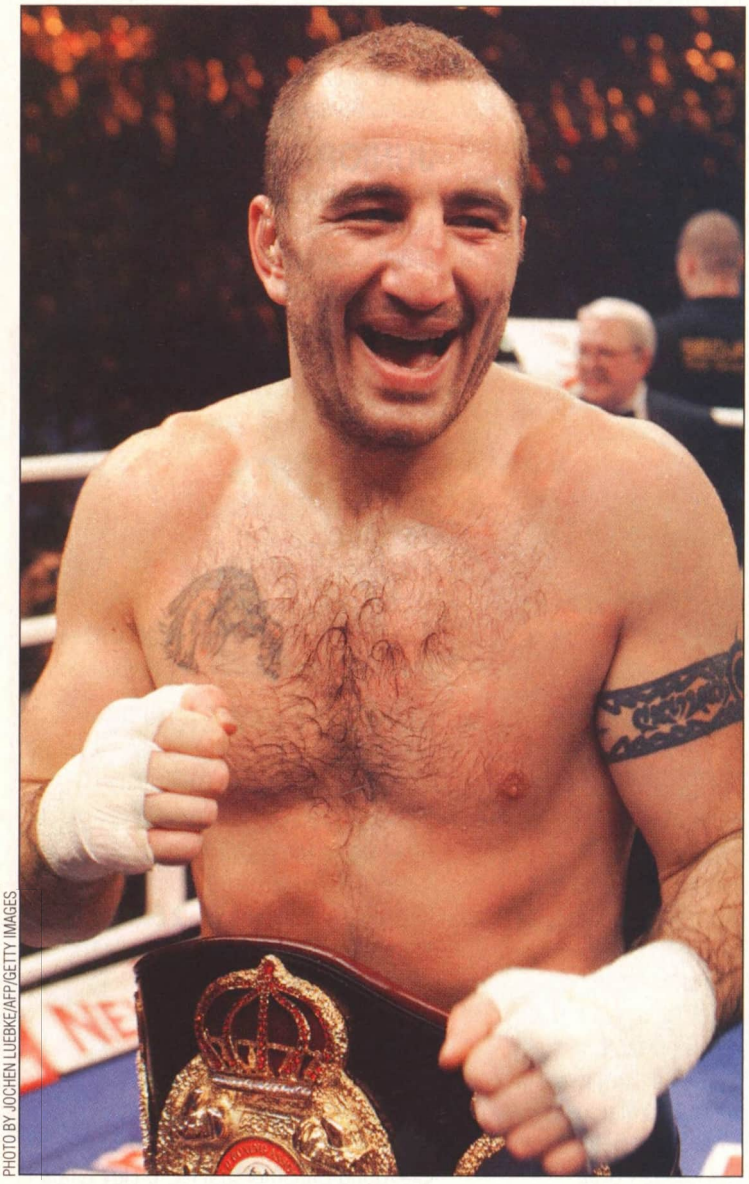

PHOTO BY JOCHEN LUEBKE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Remember that pudgy French cruiserweight who looked a little bit like he trained on French pastries before easily disposing of assorted patsies? Remember how he got blown out in one round, knocked down three times inside three minutes, by the light-hitting Virgil Hill nearly five years ago? Did you think we'd ever hear from Fabrice Tiozzo again after that disaster?

You could say we never did hear from *that* Fabrice Tiozzo again; we've heard from a different Fabrice Tiozzo. A Fabrice Tiozzo with six-pack abs, no hint of a second chin, and more of the quickness of his youth. Since returning to 175 pounds after an eight-year cruiserweight stint, Tiozzo first reclaimed an alphabet title, then pushed his comeback to the next level in February by becoming the first man to knock out Dariusz Michalczewski.

Say what you want about Michalczewski being used up, but Tiozzo was recently believed to be every bit as used up. But he made a proactive decision to be a serious light heavyweight instead of journeyman cruiserweight, and the result is that, in a year in which two old-time French fighters will be inducted into the Hall of Fame, Tiozzo is making an unexpected late run at giving himself an outside shot at joining them.

• • • •

Fabrice Tiozzo

RINGSIDE REPORTS

Miguel Cotto KO 5 DeMarcus Corley

Bayamon, Puerto Rico: Rising junior welterweight star Cotto was given all he could handle by the gutsy Corley before receiving a gift from the referee in front of over 10,000 of his ravenous countrymen at the Coliseo Ruben Rodriguez. Until the premature stoppage, it was a bombs-away war that raised the stock of both combatants.

Things didn't start out well for Cotto, Caguas, Puerto Rico, as he had to tip the scales four times in 90 minutes the day of the weigh-in before finally making 140. But the 24-year-old former Olympian gained a staggering 17 pounds overnight (according to HBO's unofficial scales) and went after Corley, 137, from the opening bell like a lion attacking an injured zebra. Thirty seconds into the first round, Cotto's extra strength gained him a flash knockdown, as he pushed Corley, Washington, D.C., to the canvas with a left behind the head. The rest of the first stanza saw the local hero chasing and cornering the 30-year-old Corley, forcing him to trade, at one point half-pushing him through the ropes.

"Chop Chop" got a reprieve in the second, as Cotto had a point deducted by referee Enrique Quinones Falu (Puerto Rico) for a low blow without even getting a warning. Corley began to figure out his foe, landing counter right hooks with increasing regularity. Cotto appeared to be going for the knockout, sensing his size and strength might be too much for the American, who entered unofficially at 140. But Corley found success with movement and combinations. Cotto appeared frustrated by Chop's southpaw style, and nailed him after the bell in an uncharacteristic show of exasperation.

Cotto's greed almost got the best of him in the third. After taking a good bodyshot from the Puerto Rican, Corley rocked Cotto a minute in with a hard right hook to the left temple that turned Cotto's legs to spaghetti as the crowd gasped. Chop Chop, who designs his own ringwear, moved in to sew things up, going to both the body and head. But he took too long to reach his foe, thinking too much as he walked in on the beleaguered Cotto instead of making an urgent beeline. Cotto was able to gradually gather himself, blocking, rolling, and holding to survive.

Cotto resumed the role of aggressor in the fourth, and this time it was Corley who landed the low blow 30 seconds in, costing him a point. Cotto stalked the challenger in round five and they traded again, Chop's right hook vs. Cotto's one-two. Two bodyshots followed by two left hooks had Corley retreating to the ropes. A right to the head and a borderline bodyshot put Corley on one knee, where Cotto got in another left while Chop Chop was down. Falu said nothing about the possible infraction, scoring it a knockdown with a minute left. A few moments after rising, Chop Chop took a knee after ducking three straight punches. Falu then inexplicably waved off the fight at the 2:40 mark, and Corley and his corner were justifiably livid.

"I took a knee to gather myself," said Corley, 28-4-1 (16), afterward. "All three punches missed me. I wasn't even hurt. The ref could have stopped the fight earlier when I had Cotto hurt."

Said Cotto, 23-0 (19), "Corley's a good fighter. I was hurt bad in that (third) round, but I couldn't let down all the people here. I had to come back." Chop Chop and his people are demanding a rematch, but Cotto seems to be looking first at Vivian Harris in June. A rematch is not out of the question, however, as Harris tends to price himself out of fights.

Promoters: Top Rank and P.R. Best Boxing

(2-26-05)

Mike Greenhill

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Cotto absorbs a hard shot from surprisingly difficult Corley

Antonio Margarito KO 10 Sebastian Lujan

Atlantic City, New Jersey: By the time it was over, it was easy to forget the phenomenal punch output put forth by Margarito or the fact that he'd successfully cleared the road to a major welterweight showdown with Kermit Cintron. What instead stood out about this fight was its hideous conclusion, when little-known Argentine challenger Lujan's bid for a belt was stopped because his left ear was actually beginning to fall off. It was an absolutely stomach-churning image, and the result was a well-earned TKO for Margarito at 2:57 of the 10th round.

In the first two rounds, tough 5'6" fireplug Lujan, 146, looked capable of springing the upset and spoiling the Cintron fight, as he pressed the action and landed good lefts and rights in both rounds. But it was primarily just a case of Margarito, 147, being his usual slow-to-get-going self, and once he started pumping his jab in the third, it was the Mexican's fight. Margarito throws the uppercut about as well as anyone in boxing, and he landed a beauty in the fourth, the round in which he firmly established his superiority.

Margarito's body work earned him the close fifth round, and the sixth was his best round of the fight, as he wobbled the 25-year-old Lujan with a right to the temple.

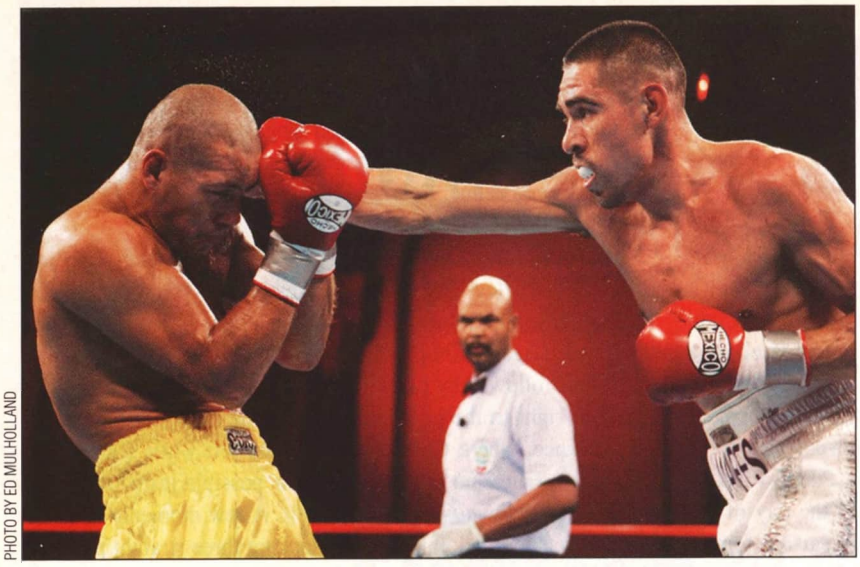

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Margarito connects with a long right hand

According to CompuBox, Margarito threw an astounding 144 punches in the sixth and landed 54 of them, while the overwhelmed Lujan connected on 18 of 66. By the eighth, Lujan, who was clearly running out of offensive ideas, began bleeding out of his left ear, and in round nine it began to turn into a cauliflower ear, swelling quite grotesquely. Margarito, 26, shook the Argentine early in the 10th, rocking him with two big right hands and then an uppercut. A series of lefts then hurt Lujan, 22-2-1 (14), but he refused to go down.

Late in the round, referee David Fields (USA) noticed that the skin on the top of Lujan's ear was separating and that the inner part was actually flopping freely, so he called in ringside doctor Eric Wurmser to take a look. Almost immediately, Lujan's cornermen, getting a good look at their fighter, threw in the towel, and not a moment too soon for anyone remotely squeamish.

"The cartilage around the rim of his ear came off," Wurmser explained. "I managed to put it back on, but he's going to have to get it sewn."

Margarito, meanwhile, moved to 31-4 (22) with a performance in which he threw 110 punches or more in six consecutive rounds.

"He was a little awkward, so we had to be worried about the headbutts. We had to box him," Margarito said. "As soon as I started hitting him to the body, he lost a lot of his power."

Television: ESPN2

Promoters: Main Events, Top Rank

(2-18-05)

Fabrice Tiozzo KO 6 Dariusz Michalczewski

Hamburg, Germany: For years, they have been titans of European boxing, Tiozzo the man who defeated a legend in Mike McCallum to become a light heavyweight titleholder, and Michalczewski a fighter who stood out as the most legitimate threat to Roy Jones when Jones was at his best in this division. They clashed in a junior amateur tournament almost 20 years ago, Michalczewski prevailing, but it was Tiozzo who proved himself the better man, securing a sixth-round stoppage win to retain the WBA light heavyweight title at the Color Line Arena. It was his first defense.

Michalczewski, 175, Hamburg, Germany, via Gdansk, Poland, had not fought for 17 months, since losing by split decision to Mexico's Julio Gonzalez in a bout that would have brought him level with Rocky Marciano's mythic numbers of 49-0.

A first-round destruction by Virgil Hill in 2000, at cruiserweight, seemingly signaled the end of Tiozzo as a world-class performer. But he resurrected himself as a light heavyweight again and, in March 2004, defeated Italy's Silvio Branco by a majority points decision to claim the WBA title. Traveling to Hamburg, the scene of Michalczewski's greatest triumphs, to fight before a crowd of 17,000, was like entering the lion's den, but Tiozzo was undaunted. "A boxing ring is a boxing ring, no matter where it's located," he said. "I accept that the fight takes place in Hamburg. That way the entire pressure will be on Dariusz. I'm not afraid of his home advantage, and I don't believe that I can only win by knockout. There are three independent judges at ringside. I have complete faith in this."

As it transpired, he did not need them. The 35-year-old Frenchman proved stronger than the 36-year-old Pole, whose skills, reflexes, and timing were diminished by his recent inactivity. He declared beforehand that a fighter learns more from defeat than from victory, but the harsh truth Michalczewski discovered is that he is no longer the "Tiger" he once was. Tiozzo, 174¼, St. Denis, France, was the better preserved of the two veterans.

A hard right to the temple hurt the Pole midway through round six, and a succession of blows put him on the floor. South African referee Stanley Christodoulou tolled the mandatory eight-count, and Michalczewski was allowed to continue. But Tiozzo's follow-up salvo convinced the official that Michalczewski, 48-2 (38), needed to be rescued, and he intervened rightly at the 2:15 mark, to Tiozzo's delight.

"I studied Michalczewski and I was 100 percent prepared. When

PHOTO BY JOCHEN LUEBKE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Tiozzo blasts fading Michalczewski with a right

you're that prepared, you have to win," said Tiozzo, 47-2 (31). He called for a fight with Jones, but it would prove nothing. After two devastating knockout defeats, Jones has likely had his last fight. Michalczewski probably has too.

Promoter: Universum Box Promotions

(2-26-05)

Brian Doogan

Jermain Taylor KO 3
Daniel Edouard

Los Angeles, California: As his former sparring partner, Edouard must have picked up some useful firsthand information on Taylor, but it didn't do him any good. The likable 26-year-old Olympian out of Little Rock, Arkansas, was too fast, too strong, too prepared. Edouard's willingness to stand and trade made this a good, short contest.

Edouard, 162, a 24-year-old Floridian who started life in Haiti, barely stood up to the pressure in round one. Then Taylor, 161, turned up the heat in round two, landing solid shots to the body and head. By round three, Edouard's defense was shot, and Taylor came out to finish the job. He threw a series of one-twos that landed flush. After a big Taylor hook, his opponent was helpless in the corner and referee Ray Corona (USA) jumped in to save him at 2:26 in the round.

Fans are always pleased with fighters who get down to business, and the nearly 13,000 in attendance at Staples Center clearly appreciated the no-nonsense approach of Taylor, 23-0 (17). He looked particularly exciting compared to the main event that followed, when middleweight champion Bernard Hopkins was content to outpoint Howard Eastman, torturing him with slickness but making no real effort to finish him. There was more action in round one of Taylor-Edouard than in the first three rounds of Hopkins-Eastman.

With each outing, Taylor pounds harder on the biggest middleweight door of all, and after this victory he finally said he's gunning for Hopkins. "I think [Hopkins] is a great fighter," Taylor said. "He's still a dangerous fighter. Just give me a chance to see what I can do." As for Edouard, 16-1-2 (9), Taylor said simply, "I think he was a little too cocky in the press conference."

Television: HBO

Promoter: Golden Boy Promotions

(2-19-05)

Ivan Goldman

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Ref Corona saves Edouard from Taylor's assault

Robbie Peden KO 8
Nate Campbell

Melbourne, Australia: Peden sure made his Australian professional debut a memorable one when he stopped cocky American Nate Campbell to win the vacant IBF junior lightweight title. In a rematch of their incredible March 2004 fight, in which Peden, being thoroughly outclassed, knocked Campbell cold when given a virtual free hit, the St. Louis, Missouri-based Aussie stopped his bitter rival in the eighth round as his superior strength finally prevailed.

Campbell, 129½, Tallahassee, Florida, started in quick fashion and appeared to have the better of the early going courtesy of his superior hand and foot speed. After a close first round, "The Galaxxy Warrior" appeared to take rounds two and three by landing a number of solid right hands over Peden's low-slung left.

In the latter stages of round four, though, the entire course of the matchup changed direction when, following a clinch, Campbell emerged with a nasty cut above the right eye. Referee John Wright (Australia) ruled the cut was as a result of a punch, infuriating Camp-

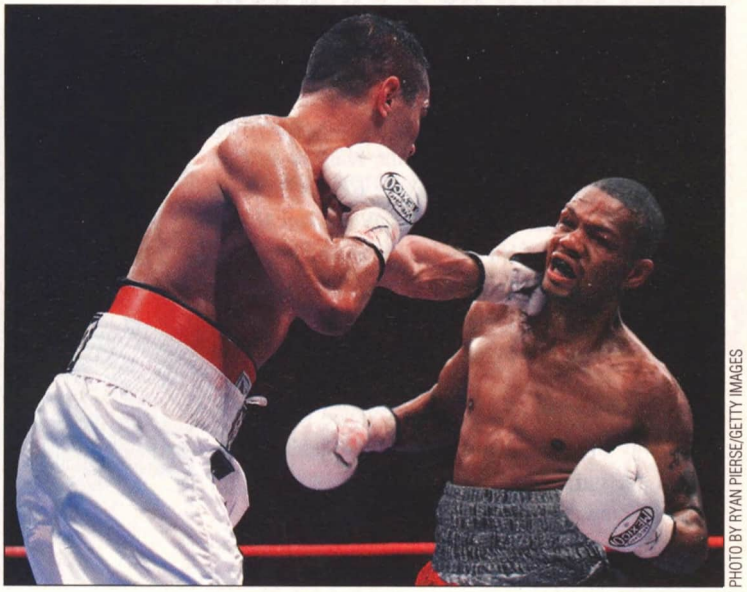

PHOTO BY RYAN PIERSE/GETTY IMAGES

Peden slams a jab into Campbell's battered face

bell's trainer, John David Jackson. Subsequent viewing of television replays would confirm the cut was caused by a clash of heads.

Campbell, 32, came out for round five knowing full well his chances of success were dwindling with each passing minute, as not only was his cut a serious one, but the Brisbane-born Peden, 31, had absorbed the Floridian's best right hands over the first four rounds and had yet to take a backward step. "Bomber" Peden, 130, would not relent and wore down his rival with a steady stream of powerful jabs and bodyshots from rounds five through eight. Campbell was clearly losing his composure, as not only was he bleeding from cuts above both his eyes and his nose, but he had been penalized a point for a low blow in round six and was clearly distressed by the way the contest was being refereed.

Peden, 25-2 (14), could sense the end was near when he finally trapped a wilting Campbell, 25-3-1 (21), along the ropes and unleashed yet another combination of blows upon The Galaxxy Warrior. Referee Wright jumped in at the 2:49 mark and stopped the contest. At the time of the stoppage, all three judges had underdog Peden in the lead. THE RING had it 68-65 Peden.

The American's corner protested the stoppage, but really it was only a matter of time given the tremendous punishment that Campbell was beginning to absorb.

"I'm not a sore loser," Campbell said. "If I lose, I say I lost. I didn't lose this fight by myself. I had a lot of help out there."

The crowd of 3,000 at Vodaphone Arena went wild as Peden was carried around the ring, arms triumphantly raised, on the shoulders of former stablemate and longtime friend David Tua. With his white trunks stained with the blood of his defeated opponent, the Aussie announced, "This is just the beginning," and told his potential list of opponents that he had the belt and that they could now come to him. In truth, though, his belt is of modest value, as the boxing world knows well that it was dubiously stripped from Erik Morales prior to his 2004 fight with Marco Antonio Barrera.

Promoters: Blaster Promotions, Blue Corner, Goossen-Tutor
(2-23-05)
Daniel Gaylor

Monte Barrett KO 9 Owen Beck

St. Louis, Missouri: A good rule of thumb for managers of unbeaten heavyweights has been established: Keep your fighters away from Monte Barrett.

After exposing Joe Mesi and then outpointing Dominick Guinn, Barrett added the scalp of another undefeated prospect at the Savvis Center, making good on his promise to change "What The Heck" Beck's nickname to "Hit The Deck." In a highly entertaining battle, Barrett overcame a gruesome cut across his left eyelid to put the less experienced Beck on the canvas a total of three times and force the stoppage at 2:52 of the ninth round.

After a close first round that seemed to go Barrett's way thanks to some outstanding jabbing, the drama got started in the second when Barrett, 218, Queens, New York, blasted Beck, 234, Nashville, Tennessee, via Jamaica, with a right uppercut and then a left to the cheek that put the prospect on the floor. The previously untested 28-year-old easily beat American referee Jay Nady's count, and was slugging back on even terms by the end of the round.

Beck started to dig his way out of the hole in the third, rocking a somewhat weary-looking Barrett into the ropes with two rights and a left. Beck was continuing to do well in some inside exchanges in the fourth when a clash of heads appeared to open a bad cut on Barrett's eyelid (though Nady ruled that it was caused by a punch, putting the 33-year-old New Yorker at serious risk of a TKO loss). Beck had an even better round in the fifth, when he wobbled Barrett with a left hook and generally looked like the much sturdier fighter.

Barrett's cut, about an inch long and gaining in width, looked hideous in his corner heading into the sixth, but the bleeding had miraculously been stopped. "Two Gunz" also stopped the bleeding in a figurative sense, winning his first round in a while on the strength of an impressive left uppercut and then a left hook. He wobbled Beck with a looping right hand in the seventh, and in the eighth, Barrett scored with a beauty of a left uppercut. But Beck, showing plenty of poise in his first real dogfight, came on with two good right hands late in the round to possibly steal it.

Heading into the ninth, Beck led by one point on one judge's card, while Barrett held one- and three-point edges on the other two. But the veteran blew the fight open midway through the round when he rocked Beck with a right-left combination, then followed with an assault along the ropes that prompted Nady to yell at Beck to "get off of there" or he might have to stop the fight. Beck got off the ropes, but top-five heavyweight contender Barrett soon hurt him with two right hands, then dropped him face-first with a cuffing left. Beck struggled up at the count of seven, but Barrett greeted him with two more huge rights and another left to send him tumbling again. As Beck, 24-1 (18), crashed down, Nady called it off without a count.

"This guy fought an excellent fight," said Barrett, 31-3 (17). "He gave me a lot of motivation for this fight because he talked so much. He talked me into shape, he talked me into a frenzy ... He's a great fighter, he's got a long career ahead of him, but I'm on a whole other level."

Television: Showtime
Promoter: Don King Productions
(2-5-05) ■

PHOTO BY ELSA/GETTY IMAGES

Bloody Barrett takes down another unbeaten heavyweight

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New Face

(Continued from page 22)

but it's not quite considered a boxing hotbed.

"I know I may have to go outside this area," said Kimbrough, 22, who boasts an accomplished amateur background that includes Golden Gloves titles at 106, 112, 119, 125, and 132 pounds, and the United States Open nationals at 132 in 2002. "But I am young, and I know I have plenty of time, even though I would like to fight for a world title sometime next year."

There wouldn't be a next year for Kimbrough—or even a *this* year—if Yankello hadn't bugged him so much throughout his pre-teen and teenage years. The veteran trainer came across Kimbrough in, of all places, a high school wrestling tournament.

As a mascot for the Aliquippa High School wrestling team, there was the 11-year-old Kimbrough running around in a wrestling singlet and clowning with the older, larger high school kids prior to a match. Yankello happened to be in the crowd, when he spotted this tiny kid, all of about 60 pounds, rolling around with high schoolers two or three times his size.

"Verquan was real wiry, and I was impressed and I felt that if you grab a kid with talent at that age and groom him that young, good things can happen," said Yankello, who also used to train Spadafora. "I always had that vision, especially with a real, young kid with desire. Verquan was a tough little kid, and he beat all the little kids in the mighty-mite wrestling division. I just came up to him at one of the matches and asked if he wanted to try boxing and he said, 'Yeah, I'll try it.'"

It didn't take long for Kimbrough to hate it. Growing up, he played all the traditional sports, from baseball, to basketball, to football. Kimbrough, a cousin of former University of Pittsburgh and Dallas Cowboys great Tony Dorsett, wasn't used to the unique isolation involved in being a boxer.

"I was always a part of a team sport; training alone took some getting used to, because I was there by myself, lifting weights and running," Kimbrough said, laughing at the memory. "There was no time for playtime. Tom would have me run these hills. I'd open my mouth and cry, and nothing would come out.

"Boxing was a seasonal thing for me. It was my summer sport. There were a lot of times I wanted to quit. Yankello kept coming to my house. He showed up at my football games, baseball games, he was always there. After I was done playing, then he took me right to the gym afterwards, with me kicking and complaining. I hated it when he came and got me. Tom didn't care. My parents were okay with it, too, as long as I was doing something positive. They knew Tom was a good guy. He really looked out for me."

Kimbrough found out later that Yankello saw something in him that Kimbrough didn't see in himself—a future world champion. But it wasn't easy getting Kimbrough to stick with the sport long enough to realize his potential.

"Oh, Verquan put me through all kinds of hell," Yankello said, laughing. "One time, when he was around 14 years old, Verquan wanted to quit again. I promised him that if he stuck with boxing for a year, he would be one of the best in the country.

"I had to bring out Verquan's mental toughness by being tested. Verquan has great ability, but he had to learn that he wasn't always going to be able to walk through everyone. I wanted to give it a full year, without stopping and without giving up on himself if things didn't go his way. I wanted him to make a decision. Once he gave me that commitment, he saw what he could do. The following year, he was a national champion."

From then, Kimbrough was hooked on boxing. He eschewed the other sports and saw boxing as a way out of Aliquippa. His older brother, Michael, is in prison for shooting someone, and his father had done time for drugs. Kimbrough wanted to break free of that sort of family history. Through boxing, Kimbrough suddenly had ambitions, envisioning a world title belt around his waist one day.

But whether or not Kimbrough can be a world champion still needs to be determined. He has one-punch knockout ability with his right hand, and gets good leverage on his left hook. Kimbrough has displayed elusive defensive skills, but if there is a deficiency, Yankello points out, it's that Kimbrough doesn't know just how much power he has and doesn't put his punching ability to use.

"I suppose that's my biggest complaint," Yankello said. "Verquan doesn't realize how hard he throws a punch. He realizes his natural skills. He has the ability to roll, block, and slip punches while staying in front of an opponent. But he doesn't realize how good he is. Once he does, he has potential to where the sky is the limit."

Light years different from the kid who once cried silently while running, Kimbrough has evolved into a fierce fighter with a strong work ethic. "I'm not the kid silent crying anymore," he said. "You know something, I haven't cried in years." ■

PHOTO BY CHUCK SAUS

Kimbrough targets Ubaldo Olivencia with a right hand

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THE FIGHT DOCTOR

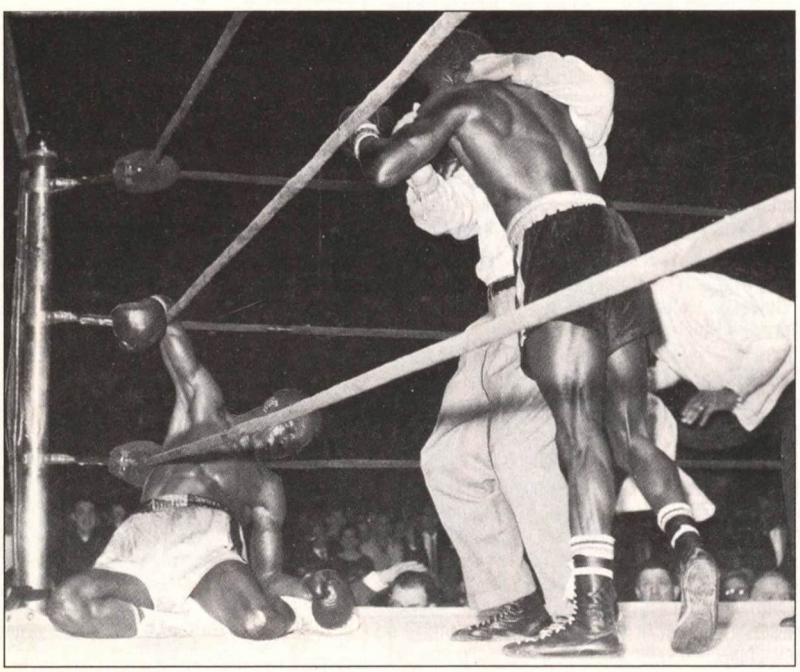
By Margaret Goodman, MD

BOXING CATASTROPHES: AN EXPLORATION OF CAREER-ENDING BRAIN INJURIES AND RING DEATHS

In its January 16, 2005, edition, *The New York Times* published an article by Bill Carter discussing the documentary *Ring Of Fire* about the March 1962 fight between Emile Griffith and Benny "Kid" Paret. As most boxing fans know, in the 12th round of that fight, Griffith relentlessly battered Paret on the ropes with punch after punch. Finally, referee Ruby Goldstein stopped the bout, but it was too late. Paret fell into a coma and died nine days later.

As a ring physician for more than 10 years, and a person with more respect for the sport than I can verbalize, I take great offense at Mr. Carter referring to a boxer as a "murderer" because his opponent died, as he does in his column. That is just not fair, untrue, and degrading to every athlete who steps into a ring.

The medical aspects of boxing are studied less than those of perhaps any other athletic endeavor, but what we do know is that every case is different. There are so few deaths and career-ending acute neurological injuries that there has to be some predisposition, or we would see many such injuries each week.



Referee Goldstein finally pulls Griffith away from the fatally injured Paret

In Nevada, since 1995, four fighters have died as a result of boxing. All four had subdural hematomas (blood clots on the surface of the brain). Three had areas of prior injury found on autopsy, indicating that they had been susceptible to brain contusions or subdurals prior to the time they entered the ring a final time.

There are many fighters, including some former champions, who have had abnormal brain scans showing subdurals, and retired on their own for fear of future risks. There have also been instances when boxers, such as Gerald McClellan and Greg Page, have survived brain hemorrhages only to face chronic disabilities.

Ring deaths are something horrific that every generation of boxing fans has witnessed. Just as the Griffith-Paret fight shocked people watching at home in 1962, I will never forget Sean O'Grady, commentating during the Kabary Salem-

Randie Carver fight in 1999, saying that the fight needed to stop or Carver would die. I will also never forget Max Kellerman pleading on ESPN for the 2001 George Jones-Beethavean Scottland fight to be stopped. Sadly, both Carver and Scottland died of head injuries, which resulted in much anti-boxing media coverage.

On the other hand, ring deaths that aren't widely seen on television don't garner as much publicity. For example, except for the Las Vegas newspapers, Pedro Alcazar's 2002 death, from a fight that took place on a pay-per-view undercard and was viewed by a limited audience, was barely covered by the mainstream media. Interestingly, his fight with Fernando Montiel was stopped because of bodyshots. Yes, Alcazar also took a few head blows, and collapsed in a hotel room (as opposed to the ring). Nevertheless, I will never get out of my head the call I received the Monday after the fight, informing me that Alcazar was brain dead on a ventilator at a Las Vegas hospital. On that particular day, I kept asking myself why.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

An autopsy revealed the ill-fated Alcazar entered the ring for his June 2002 fight with Montiel with a previously undiagnosed brain bleed

There is an article in the February 2004 issue of *Journal Of Combative Sport* called "Death Under The Spotlight: The Manuel Velazquez Boxing Fatality Collection." The article contains the most comprehensive tally of ring deaths I've seen, beginning in 1741 and ending in February 2004. Still, the data on the almost 1,200 ring deaths listed is scant and incomplete, and illustrates how little is known about why certain fighters die from brain injuries.

Even though we have only a few more definitive answers than we did 40 years ago, I believe that if fighters pay attention to such issues, they can perhaps save themselves. It is, therefore, important to explore what we do know regarding brain injuries in boxers.

Predisposing Issues

•*Undisclosed And Ignored Injuries:* Many fighters who collapse during a fight actually enter the ring with a pre-existing injury from either a prior fight or sparring. Perhaps the fighter has been dropped or even knocked out in the gym. Often, a fighter does not want to show weakness and fails to confide in those closest to him that he is having symptoms representative of a potential cerebral bleed. These symptoms include headaches, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, memory and/or concentration difficulties, trouble with balance and/or coordination, numbness or tingling of one side of the body, and personality changes. Equally detrimental is his trainer is telling him to "fight through it."

•*Second Impact Syndrome:* SIS refers to an athlete suffering a seemingly non-significant head injury, and then soon thereafter getting hit again. The second injury, also apparently minor, quickly results in death. This usually occurs from severe brain swelling (cerebral edema).

•*Medical History:* Far too few boxers are regularly examined by private physicians. In addition, prefight exams are short, as most commissions require few medical tests. So, potentially life-threatening problems often remain undiagnosed. These can include high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, lupus, and bleeding disorders (such as Sickle Cell Disease). Furthermore, family history can create important risks for brain bleeds including all the illnesses mentioned above, plus incidence of heart attack, stroke, and aneurysm.

•*Brain Abnormalities:* Aneurysms, arteriovenous malformations, angiomas, tumors, brain cysts (arachnoid cysts), contusions (bruising in the brain), and subdural hematomas are brain abnormalities that can cause death in a fighter when he absorbs even minor punishment.

•*Weight-Loss Dehydration:* The brain is the last part of your body to lose fluid. Nevertheless, dehydration and rapid loss of water will make fighters more sluggish, slow their reflexes, and lessen their ability to defend themselves.

•*Weight Class:* Statistically, heavyweights are the least likely to have cerebral bleeds. Some theorize this is because heavyweights are not as fatigued from dehydration because they did not have to make weight.

•*Age:* Just like the rest of the body, the brain takes longer to recover from injury the older we get. Furthermore, as we age, the brain shrinks. The covering of the brain (dura) is attached to the brain by small vessels. When these vessels tear they cause bleeding on the brain's surface (subdural hematoma). As the brain shrinks, this can cause increased stress on these vessels, and theoretically make them more likely to tear with punches.

•*Medications:* Certain medications can contribute to brain bleeds by preventing blood clotting, increasing the time it takes someone to stop bleeding, or increasing blood pressure. Drugs as common as aspirin or Motrin can increase bleeding time not only regarding cuts, but also brain bleeds. Drugs such as Adderal or Ritalin are stimulants, and can increase blood pressure and susceptibility to brain bleeds.

•*Alcohol:* Recent consumption of alcohol, even minor amounts, can increase the time it takes to stop bleeding. Excessive alcohol consumption can result in liver disease that will cause the body to be less able to stop bleeding.

•*Steroids:* Steroids can also increase bleeding time, and thereby affect the brain.

Boxing will always have inherent dangers. Time will tell if more self-awareness on the part of boxers will save lives. But there's no doubt a boxer needs to listen to his body and pay attention to the warning signs that could indicate a serious problem, and not be afraid to either tell someone or seek immediate medical care. ■

Dr. Goodman will be happy to answer questions about the medical aspects of boxing in future columns. Please send inquiries to: The Fight Doctor, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

COME OUT WRITING

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

THIRD NO THRILL

Somehow, Jeff Ryan left out the Barney Ross-Jimmy McClarnin series in his "Thrillogy" column (THE RING DOUBLE, Volume III, 2005), which I definitely rate higher than the Tony Zale-Rocky Graziano trilogy. While the first two Zale-Graziano fights were incredible wars, the third, in which Zale stopped Graziano in three rounds, just doesn't measure up.

BRIAN SCHIFF
jaywilton611@yahoo.com

GREAT FIGHT, LOUSY DECISION

I just watched Oscar Larios vs. Wayne McCullough, and a great fight ended up being a scam job. What were the judges thinking when they scored it 116-111, 118 -110, and 118-109, all in favor of Larios? Fox Sports Net analyst Sean O'Grady had McCullough winning by a round. But it was still a great fight—two guys standing toe-to-toe in the middle of the ring trading bombs.

ADAM BEGOS
Westbrook, MA

BYRD WATCHER

I think that Chris Byrd has been overlooked on every pound-for-pound list that I have seen. Byrd is a brilliant technician and has more heart than anyone in boxing outside of Arturo Gatti. Byrd has beaten or earned draws against highly skilled fighters that outweigh him by 30-40 pounds, including THE RING's heavyweight champion, Vitali Klitschko. Even if Klitschko was on his way to a decision victory, he would not have blown out his shoulder if Byrd wasn't constantly making him miss, and he wouldn't have quit if it wasn't for the late-round pressure Byrd was putting on him.

BRENNAN LOWRIE
Vancouver, British Columbia

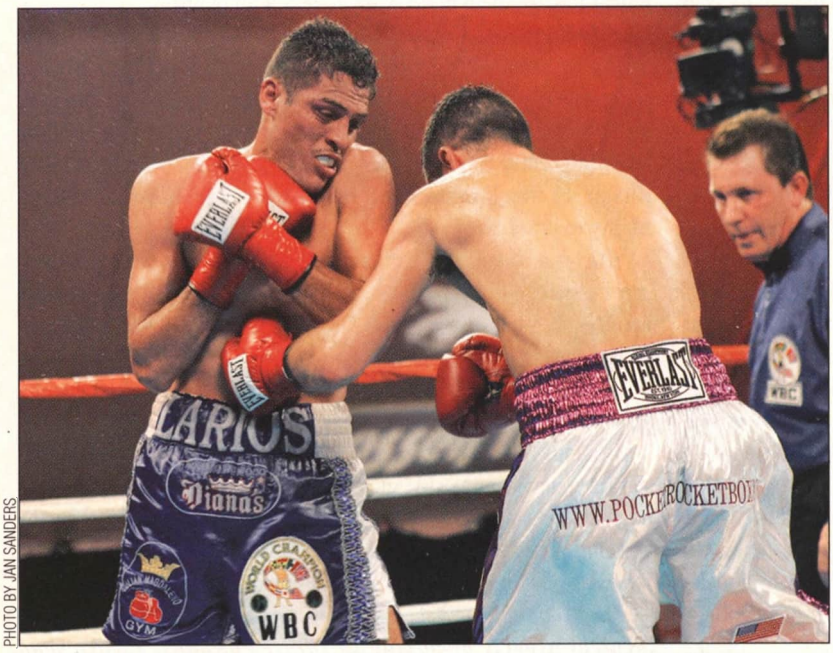


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Oscar Larios takes a left to the gut from Wayne McCullough during their thrilling slugfest in February. Like most fans, reader Adam Begos loved the fight, but felt that the one-sided scoring in favor of Larios was unfair to McCullough.

CONCERN FOR "EL FEROZ"

I think anyone who has ever seen Fernando Vargas fight has the utmost respect for him as a warrior, but I hope his planned comeback is short-lived.

Don't get me wrong; Vargas is an exciting fighter to watch, but that seems to be the problem. Every punch his opponents throw seems to find his head with a thud. Vargas' lack of speed and inability to see a punch coming and then roll with it seems to suggest a fighter old before his time. Fernando has always been a bit stiff in the ring, but the Oscar De La Hoya fight was scary for his lack of head movement. De La Hoya has not had knockout power since he moved up in weight, but

he was able to devastate Vargas. Fernando is a tragedy waiting to happen when he gets in the ring with a world-class fighter with a decent punch.

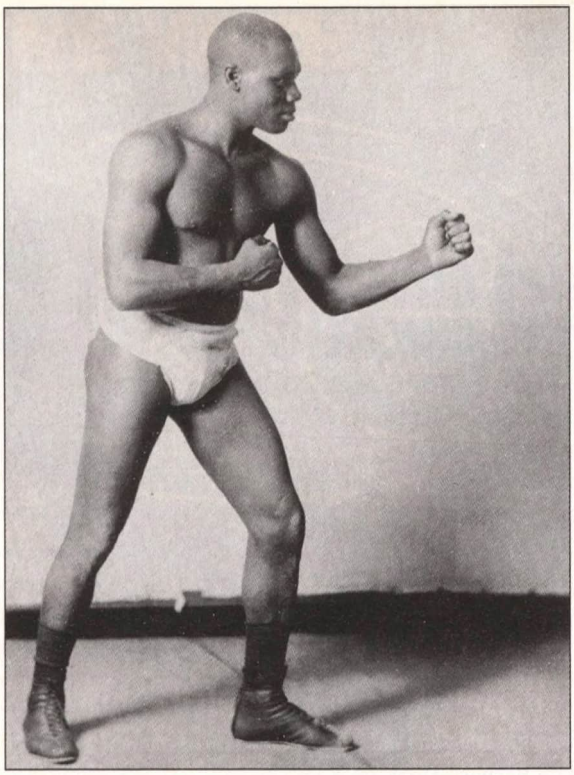
JAMES W. WAYLAND
jameswwayland@aol.com

RATING ROY

This is where I think Roy Jones stands among the greatest light heavyweights of all-time:

1. Sam Langford
2. Ezzard Charles
3. Gene Tunney
4. Bob Fitzsimmons
5. Archie Moore
6. Roy Jones
7. Tommy Loughran
8. Bob Foster
9. Michael Spinks
10. Billy Conn
11. Harold Johnson
12. Jimmy Bivins

BARRIE READER
Surrey, England



Was Sam Langford the greatest light heavyweight of all-time? Well, reader Barrie Reader certainly thinks so, and to put things into perspective, he provides us with his personal list of the top-12 175-pounders in the history of gloved boxing.

CRUISER CONNOISSEUR

I am writing to express my desire to see more coverage of the cruiserweight division. I know the mere mention of the cruisers usually elicits a laugh from fans and writers alike, but this moribund division is undergoing a bit of a resurgence of late. First off, we have the battle between Wayne Braithwaite and Jean-Marc Mormeck, a bout that will unify the alphabet straps and, more importantly, crown a new RING champion. It's a superb match pitting Braithwaite's powerpunching and athleticism against Mormeck's chin, pressure, and stamina. Then there's O'Neil Bell and Kelvin Davis, whose entertaining first encounter ended inconclusively, and ageless wonders Johnny Nelson and Carl Thompson. Moreover, one gets the impression that former champ Virgil Hill might be capable of one more worthy performance based on the Mormeck rematch. Rounding out the division is gatekeeper-type Dale Brown and unbeaten Steve Cunningham, who could be the division's future.

ANTHONY MEDINA
San Leandro, CA

FREEDOM FIGHTER

I received the Spring 2005 issue of THE RING today and read Brian Doogan's article, "Klitschko Takes His Fight To The Streets Of Kiev." I don't think I have ever been as inspired by a fighter as I am with Vitali Klitschko and his fight in the Ukraine. I'm only 24 and didn't get a chance to see the likes of Ali or many other political athletes. It seems that today's athletes here in the United States worry more about their careers than the lives of others. I pray that Klitschko and his people never lose their freedom or their courage to fight for it. We Americans seem to forget about freedom as long as it is free.

KYLE WILLIAM FRAME
Saint Mary's, GA

COTTO-CORLEY CONTROVERSY

I am irate about the recent match between DeMarcus Corley and Miguel Cotto. The stoppage by referee Enrique Quinones Falu was not only premature, but also downright incompetent. Falu's work was completely pathetic. Worse still was the surprisingly incompetent commentary by Jim Lampley and Emanuel Steward. Not once did they reprimand the insane stoppage. Only Larry Merchant, as usual, had the guts and intelligence to call it what it was: a disgrace.

My hat goes off to "Chop Chop" Corley for not only keeping his composure and acting as a true sportsman in the face of such a gross injustice, but also for exposing Miguel Cotto as the overhyped prospect that he is. If Cotto has any integrity, he will grant Corley a much-deserved rematch.

JOHNATHAN L. IVERSON
New York, NY

GOLOTA GLUT

What a joke the alphabets have become. I've always been a fan of heavyweight boxing, but I'm beginning to have second thoughts—actually, third and fourth thoughts. How in the world do the WBA, IBF, and WBO hope to maintain what little respect they have left when they keep force-feeding us the "Andrew Golota World Title Tour"? Golota is an average fighter at best, but continues to gain, and subsequently lose, title fights, three in all by my count with the WBO still to come.

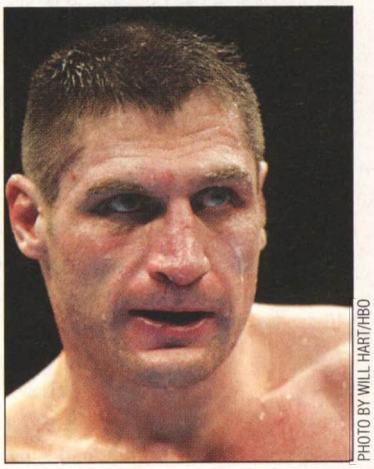


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Heavyweight Andrew Golota is scheduled to get his third consecutive shot at an alphabet heavyweight belt, even though he came up short in the first two. Reader Marty Sheehan wonders what Golota has done to earn such special treatment.

I look forward in earnest to the day when the entire boxing world wakes up and recognizes THE RING as the preeminent authority on all things boxing. Then perhaps we will no longer be subjected to paper champions, mediocre title fights, and more pretenders than contenders.

MARTY SHEEHAN
Wilmington, DE ■

LOOKING AHEAD

By Eric Raskin

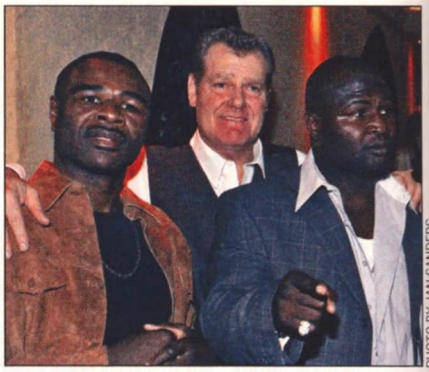


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Goossen with his two most prized fighters

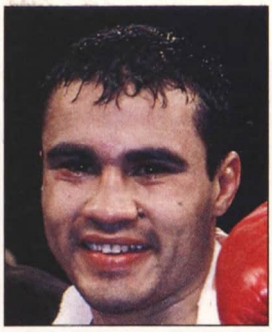
GOOSSEN'S GUYS NO SPRING CHICKENS

The two biggest stars in **Dan Goossen's** promotional stable, heavyweight contender **James Toney** and world light heavyweight champion **Glen Johnson**, are 36 and 35 years old, respectively. But that's not what the headline of this column is referencing. What we're talking about is the fights they're looking to make for this spring—tough, intriguing fights, that both seemed on their way to being finalized as we went to press.

Toney is the mandatory challenger to **John Ruiz'** WBA belt, and Goossen and Ruiz promoter **Don King** were hammering out the details in early-March, hoping to avoid going to a purse bid. The fight looks likely to happen in May or June on HBO, and Goossen isn't at all nervous about putting the recently inactive and injured Toney in with Ruiz without taking tuneup first.

"In James' mind, Ruiz *is* a tuneup," Goossen said. "I've got all the confidence in the world in James. I know there's a fighter running around out there who calls himself 'The Executioner,' but James is the true definition of an executioner. With **Bernard Hopkins**, it feels like it's a slow death, and not of the opponent, but of the fans. To play off James' nickname, he actually does switch the lights out. He's a real executioner."

Obviously, Goossen, who once promoted Hopkins and has since engaged him in some legal battles, hasn't exactly rekindled his friendship with the middleweight champ. And despite rumors of Hopkins fighting Johnson in the near future, Goossen said a rematch between Johnson and **Antonio Tarver** will definitely come first. Tarver invoked the rematch clause after losing a disputed decision and the world title to "The Road Warrior" last December, so look for that fight to happen on HBO in May or June, capping off a big spring for Goossen-Tutor Promotions.



Jesus Chavez: All-out war set vs. Hernandez

A MULTITUDE OF CHAVEZES

The bad news: **Julio Cesar Chavez** isn't retired just yet after all. The worse news: His next fight will be on pay-per-view. The good news: The show has an action-lover's dream for a main event.

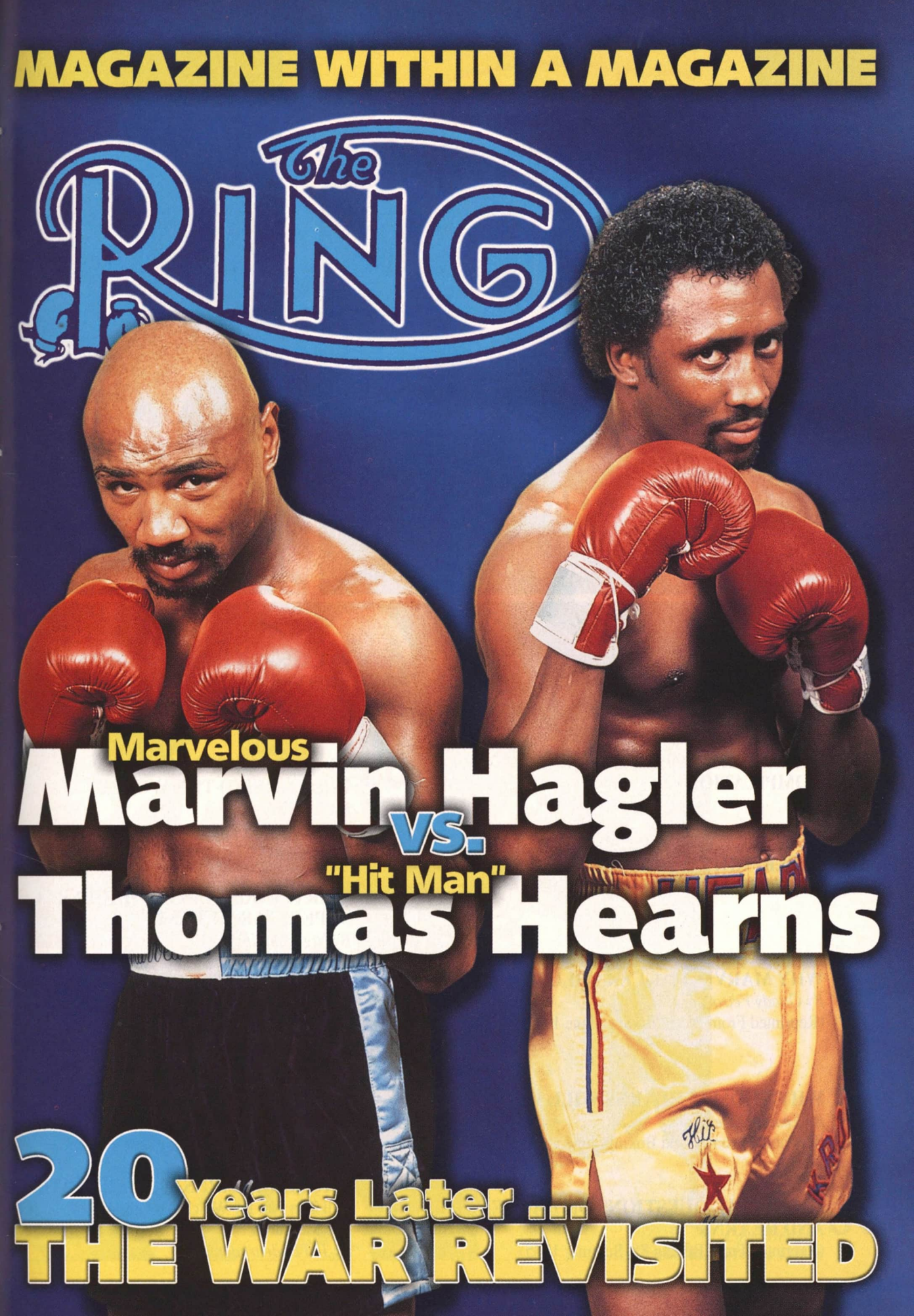
Headlining a planned May 28 PPV show from the Staples Center in Los Angeles, junior lightweight contenders **Jesus Chavez** and **Carlos Hernandez** will collide in a fight bound to feature double doses of blood and guts. On the undercard, the legendary "Lion Of Culiacan" will mark, by our count, his third un-retirement, as the 42-year-old delays his Hall of Fame induction further by taking on **Ivan Robinson**. And if that's not enough Chavezes on one card for you, 19-year-old **Julio Cesar Chavez Jr.** will also fight on the show.

There will also be one title fight, as top-rated bantamweight **Rafael Marquez** puts his belt on the line against respectable contender **Ricardo "Chapo" Vargas**.

LISTEN UP

A summer pay-per-view bout between **Bernard Hopkins** and **Jermain Taylor** is reportedly in the works. It could even come as soon as June 11, if a deal can't be made for the **Arturo Gatti-Floyd Mayweather** fight that was intended for that date … No information about **Mike Tyson's** upcoming schedule ever seems reliable, but for what it's worth, this came straight from the source: "Iron Mike" says he intends to return in late-June … The co-feature on the May 7 Showtime show from Las Vegas (**Diego Corrales** will challenge for the lightweight title in the main event) will be **Juan Manuel Marquez** vs. **Victor Polo**, the Colombian veteran who recently endured a hard-luck draw against **Scott Harrison** … One week later, on the undercard of **Felix Trinidad-Winky Wright**, new world welterweight champ **Zab Judah** will meet alphabet mandatory **Cosme Rivera** … After surviving the challenge of **Jose Navarro** on a controversial decision, top-rated 115-pounder **Katsushige Kawashima** will next fight a rubber match with **Masamori Tokuyama** in Osaka, Japan, on June 27. Tokuyama won a close decision in their first fight, and Kawashima stunned Tokuyama with a first-round blastout in the rematch. Navarro will have first crack at the winner. ■

MAGAZINE WITHIN A MAGAZINE



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(Reprinted From The Ring, July 1985)

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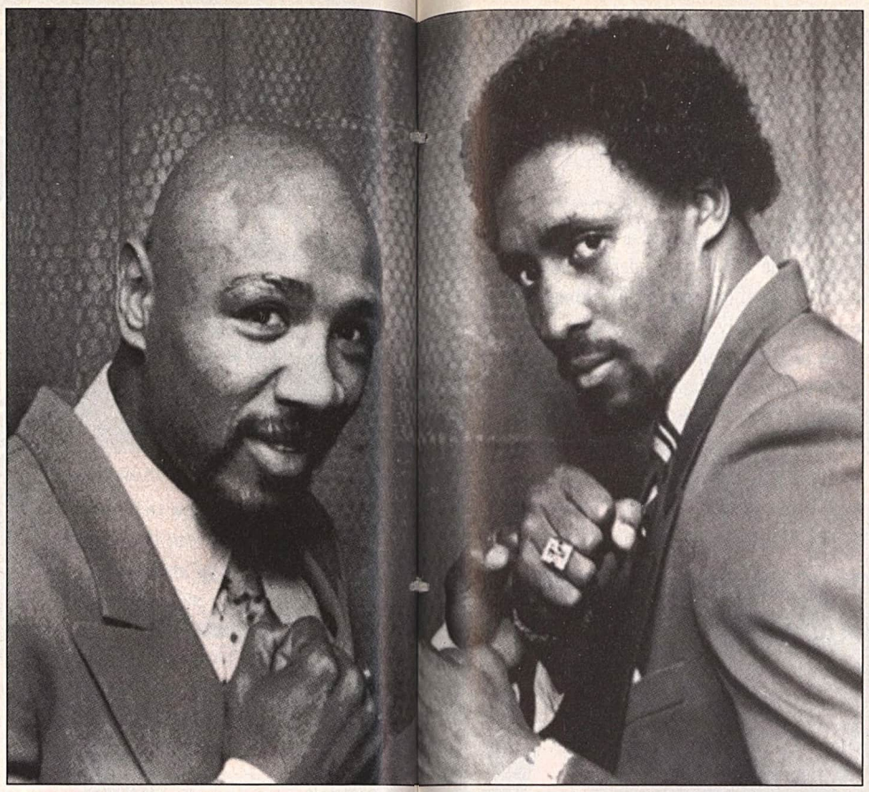

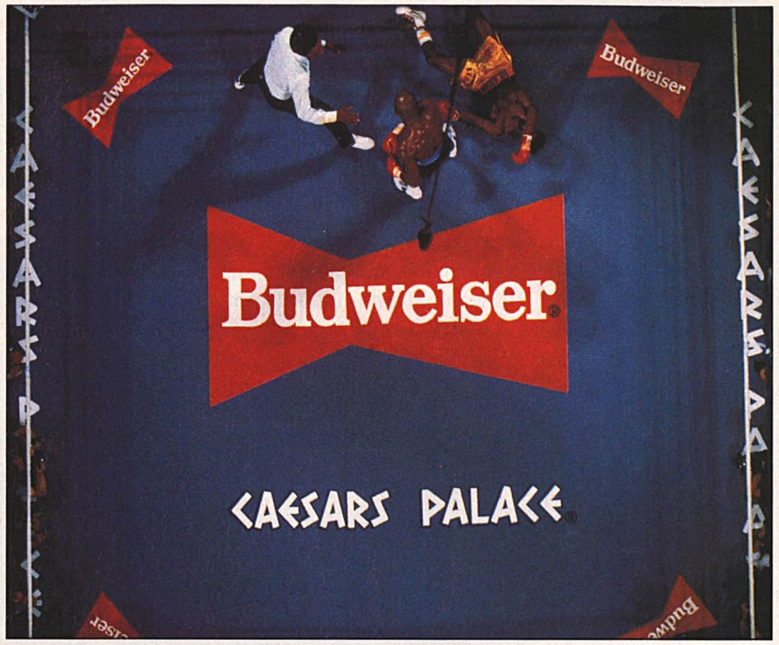

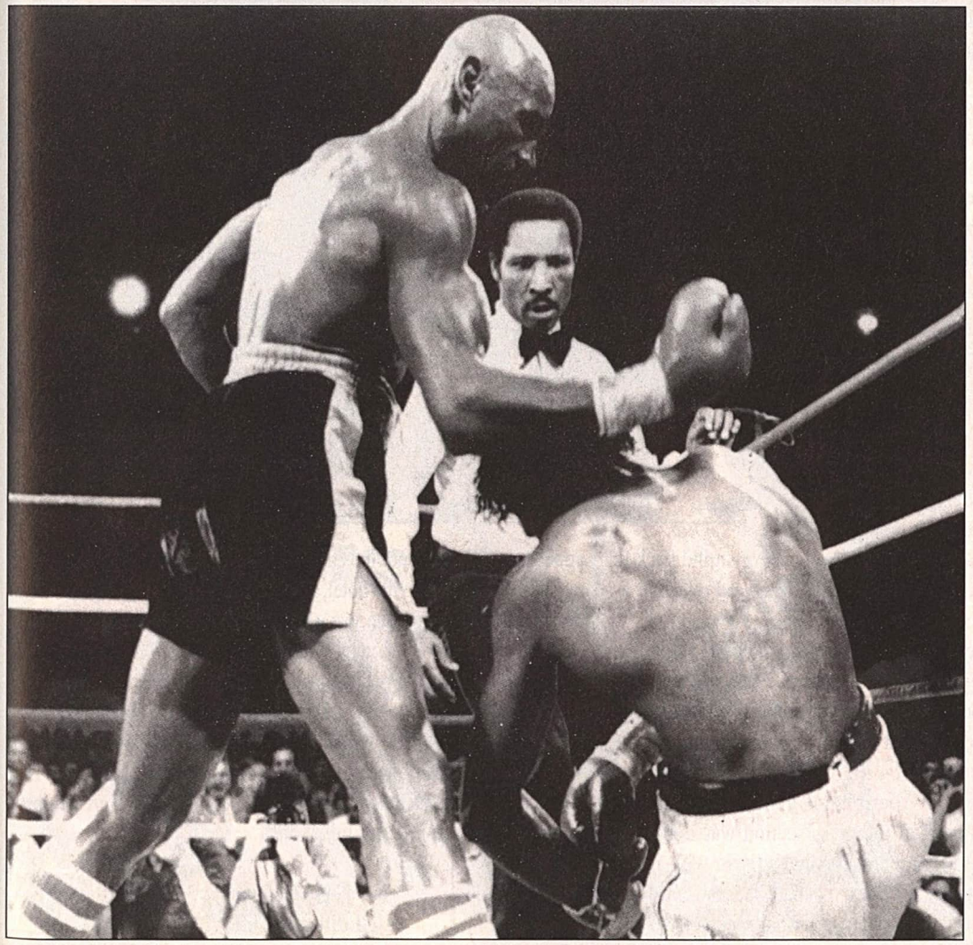

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This magazine within a magazine is the direct response to the positive feedback we received when we debuted the concept in THE RING DOUBLE, Volume II, 2004. That issue featured a similar look back at the 1974 "Rumble In The Jungle" between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman, 30 years after that historical encounter. This time we turn the pugilistic calendar back 20 years to April 15, 1985—the night middleweight champion Marvelous Marvin Hagler stopped Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns in a bout that has become an eternal benchmark for fistic ferocity.

While the Ali-Foreman classic was one of the rare occasions when a boxing match had significant political and social ramifications beyond the world of sports, the Hagler-Hearns fight is remembered strictly for what took place between the ropes. Nevertheless, what Hagler and Hearns gave us in less than three rounds was so singular that it stands alone, sans auxiliary overtones, as one of the most memorable moments in the rich annuals of the ring.

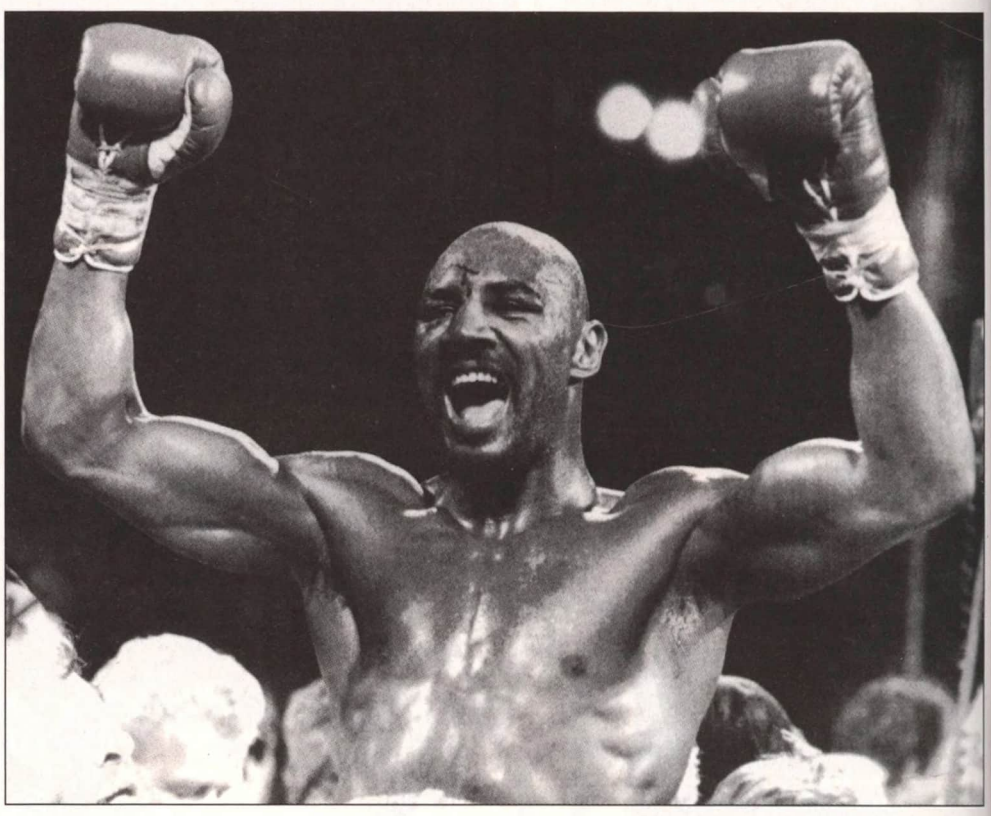
The winner is now enshrined in the International Boxing Hall of Fame and the loser surely will be as well, and when THE RING celebrated its 75th anniversary in 1997 with a gala banquet and special edition, the first round of the Hagler-Hearns fight was selected as the "Best Round" of all-time.

I was fortunate enough to be ringside at Caesars Palace for Hagler-Hearns, and my account of their epic struggle can be found in this issue *(page 120)*. Even though it was two decades ago, when I cast my mind back to that spring evening in Las Vegas, the memories flood over me as fresh and vivid as if it were yesterday.

I've covered many great battles during more than 30 years as a boxing journalist, but there were certain things that happened that night that I've never experienced before or since. The first round was so unimaginably exciting that at one point midway into the round, I found myself standing on my chair. I didn't remember getting up there, but with my peripheral vision—I dared not glance away—I saw that most of the press section was doing the same. Many of these were hardened boxing writers with much more experience than myself, but they too had been swept away by the sheer thrill of witnessing such a primordial spectacle.

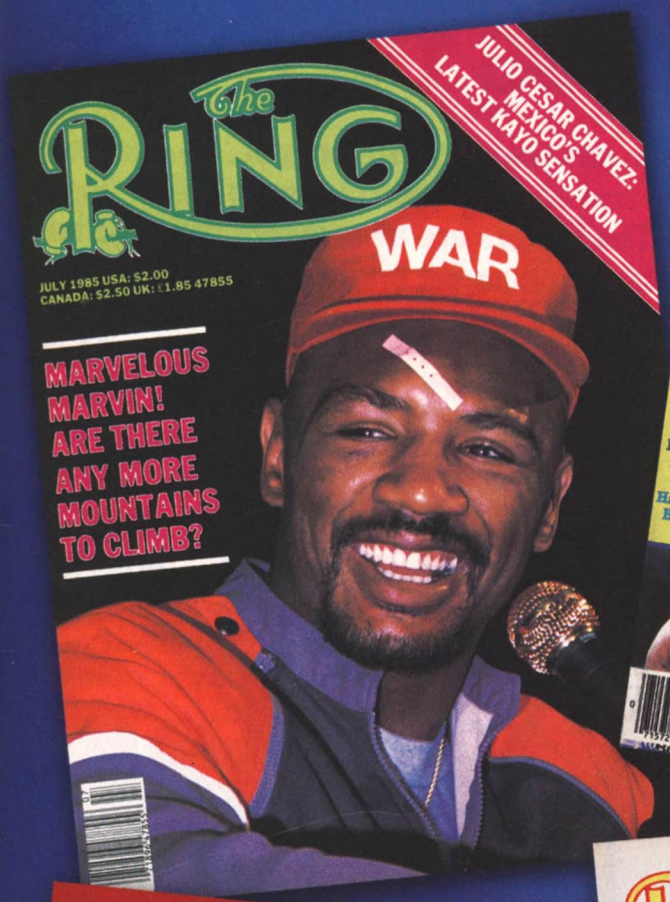
Needless to say, the crowd was in an uproar from the moment the opening bell rang, and as the round progressed and the action continued at a breathtaking pace, the din grew louder and louder. Then when the bell rang again to signal the end of this ultimate round of gloved savagery, an eerie hush fell over the scene. The silence probably only lasted a split second, but it seemed longer, and then there was an explosion of noise unlike anything I've ever heard at a boxing match, as the assembly, having gathered their collective breath, erupted with an orgasmic racket that rent the desert air like an atomic blast.

What happened in the rest of the fight is lovingly retold in the pages that follow, but one final personal note: When both the fight and the postfight press conference were over, I was left with a feeling of euphoria that lasted until the early hours of the next morning. And as I made my way back to the hotel, I realized that old saying about "walking on air" was more than just a cliche. For the first time in my life, I actually felt like I was moving through space without my feet touching the ground. One can only imagine how Hagler and Hearns felt.



Hopefully, this special tribute to such an extraordinary fight will conjure up for the reader at least some semblance of what it was like to be there the night Hagler fought Hearns. It was a moment in time when two mortal men elevated an often troubled sport to a level of immortality.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief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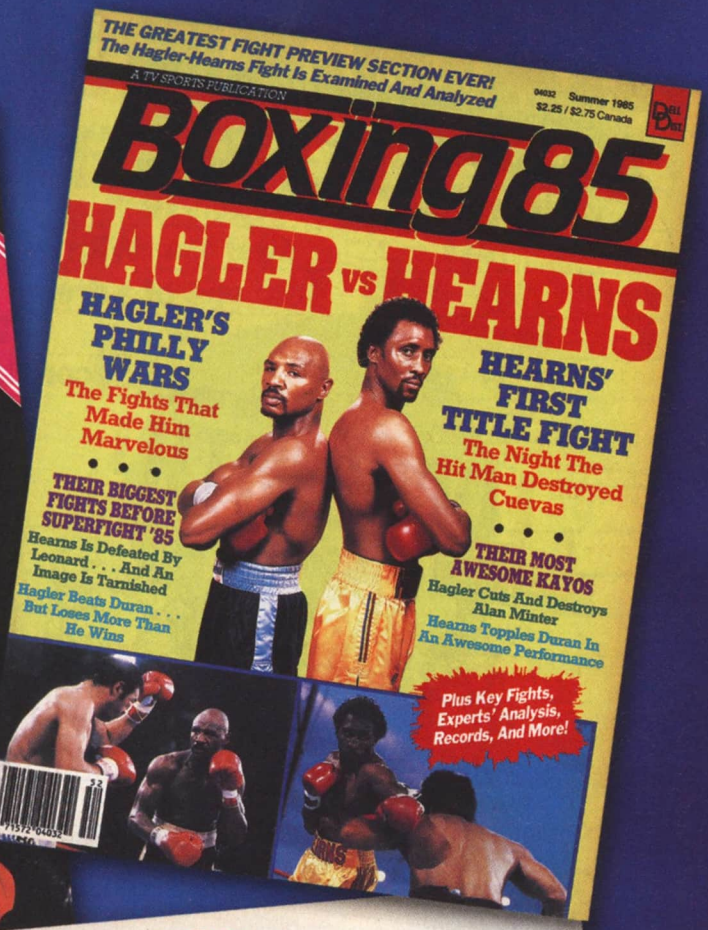
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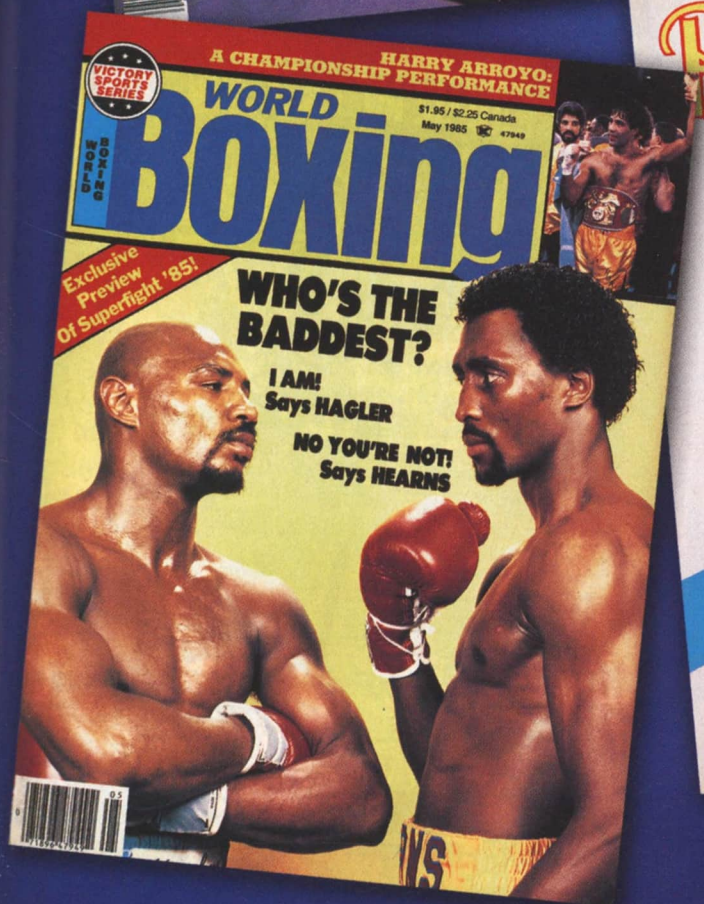
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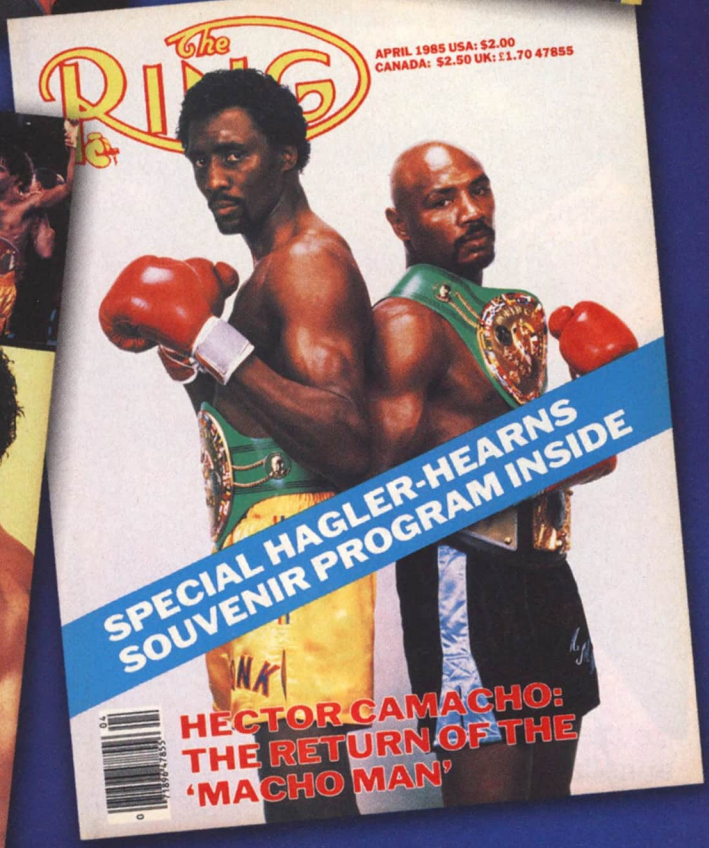
NO YOU'RE NOT! Says HEARNS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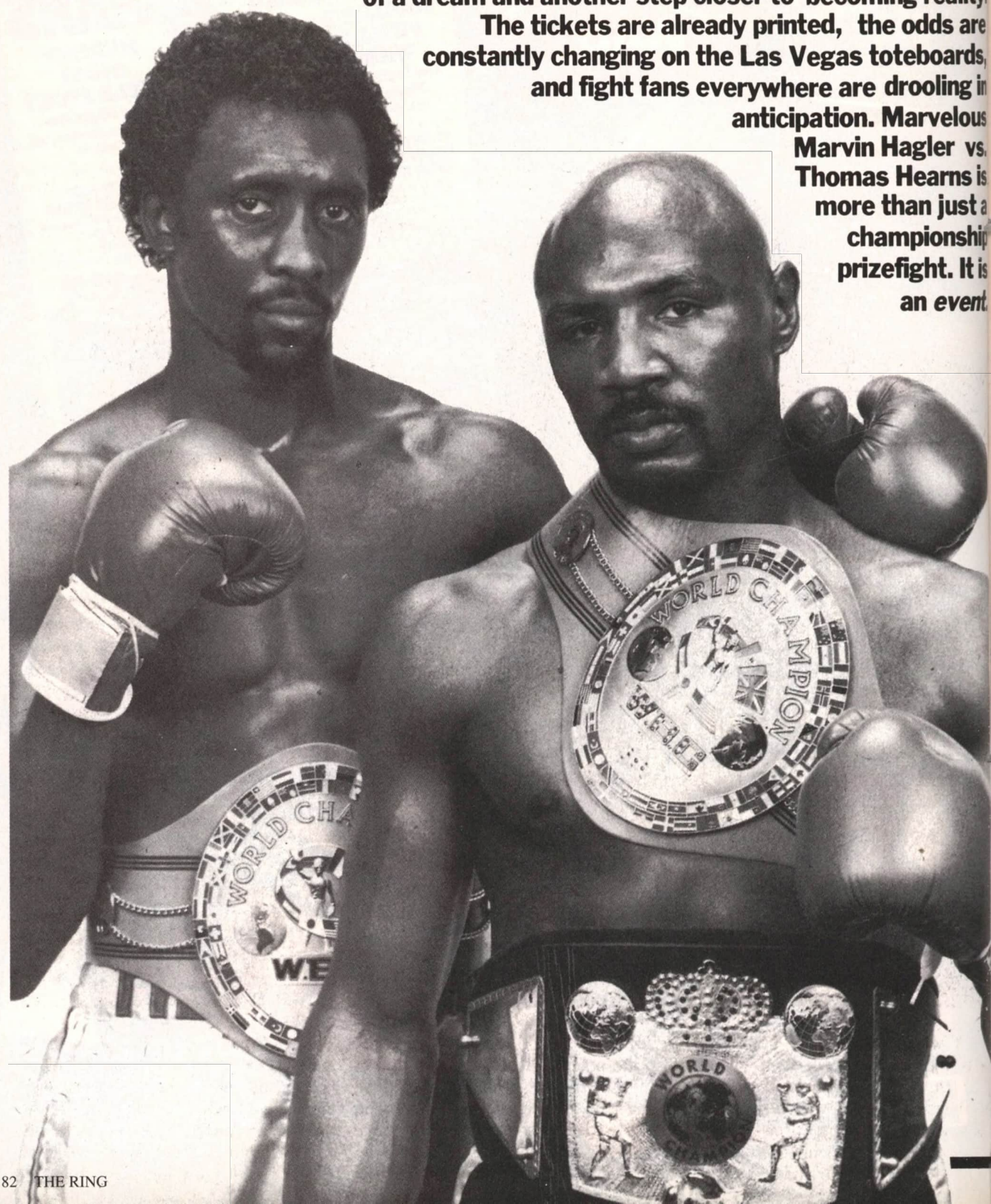
HECTOR CAMACHO: THE RETURN OF THE 'MACHO MAN'

HAGLER VS. HEARNS
SUPERFIGHT '85 PREVIEW

With each passing day, Superfight '85 becomes less of a dream and another step closer to becoming reality. The tickets are already printed, the odds are constantly changing on the Las Vegas toteboards, and fight fans everywhere are drooling in anticipation. Marvelous Marvin Hagler vs. Thomas Hearns is more than just a championship prizefight. It is an *event*.



FIGHT FACTS

Date: April 15
Site: The outdoor stadium at Caesars Palace, Las Vegas
Promoter: Top Rank Inc.
Purses: Both fighters are guaranteed $5.1 million plus a share of the profits. Hagler's share will be 45 percent, and Hearns will pocket 35 percent.
Distance: 12 rounds
Title: Undisputed Middleweight (WBA, WBC, and IBF)

TALE OF THE TAPE

HAGLER		HEARNS
May 23, 1954	Birthdate	October 18, 1958
Newark, NJ	Birthplace	Memphis, TN
Brockton, MA	Home town	Detroit, MI
30	Age	26
160 lbs.	Weight	157 lbs.
5'9"	Height	6'2"
70"	Reach	78"
40"	Chest (normal)	39"
42"	Chest (expanded)	41"
15"	Biceps	15"
12"	Forearm	12"
30"	Waist	30"
22"	Thigh	20"
15"	Calf	13"
16"	Neck	15½"
7"	Wrist	8"
12"	Fist	11½"
9"	Ankle	8"

Hagler's Views: "This is the highlight of my career. I thought I'd get my glory with Sugar Ray Leonard, but now my only glory is with Thomas Hearns. I never denied anyone the opportunity to stand with me in the ring. Come April 15, you'll see the biggest fight ever in the middleweight division. Thomas Hearns knows he's gonna have his hands full. I hope to reverse what he did to Roberto Duran."

Hearns' Views: "I've been waiting for this one for a couple of years. You thought you were surprised in the Duran fight, but I have a bigger surprise for this fight. Marvin's a great champion, but the job must be done. I'm the man who can do the job. When Marvin fought Duran, he gave him too much respect. Just like he gave Duran the respect, he'll give it to me. And then that will be it for Hagler."

The Braintrust's Views:

Goody Petronelli: "Marvin is the most complete fighter in boxing today, and he has more guns now than he ever had. Hearns doesn't have Marvin's chin, his durability, or his experience. As for Duran, he was in for a last payday against Hearns. I think Hearns needs a little more encouragement before he gets in the ring. When he's ready, we'll see who's king of the hill."

Emanuel Steward: "This is a fight that I, as a spectator, am looking forward to seeing. Both men have been exemplary of good sportsmanship and citizenship, and they have been good for boxing.

"Anyone with any speed will now give Marvin trouble. Marvin doesn't respond to punches as fast. He was getting hit by short-armed, slow, little Hamsho. Duran hit him with rights. Roldan hit him. Think what Thomas will hit him with. I think it will be a short night."

Forecast: If either man wins a close, competitive fight, and the bout is a financial success, a rematch is a strong possibility. Should Hagler win easily, he will either accept the challenge of John Mugabi and perhaps James Kinchen, or retire with his hard-earned glory and financial security. If Hearns notches an impressive win, he will make a few defenses of his new crown and then move up to light heavyweight to challenge Michael Spinks. If he is beaten badly, however, he will return to the 154-pound ranks and defend his WBC super welterweight title.

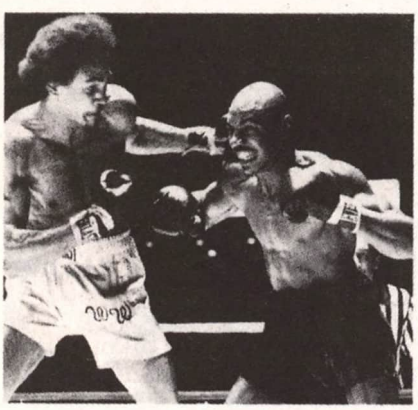
HAGLER & HEARNS:
THEIR 10 MOST SIGNIFICANT BATTLES

The roads that Marvin Hagler and Thomas Hearns traveled on their way to Superfight '85 were filled with many potential potholes, wrong turns, and deadly head-on collisions. Only two fighters as talented as Marvelous and the "Hit Man" could have survived those long journeys unscathed and emerged as the game's two most complete fighting machines.

Hagler and Hearns didn't just become boxing's two biggest superstars because of their good looks (huh?), they had to develop their skills in a string of critical career-making (or breaking) showdowns. As the drama of Superfight '85 builds, World Boxing *examines the 10 most significant bouts in the careers of Hagler and Hearns. We'll follow Hagler through his "Philly Wars," battles with the proud gladiators from the historic city who just happened to be the the best middles in world in the mid-to-late '70s. We'll glance at that memorable blowout of Alan Minter and the forgettable showdown with Roberto Duran. Then we'll turn our attentions toward Hearns and his most critical contests. Just who was his first important opponent? And how did he gradually regain his destroyer image following his loss to Sugar Ray Leonard?*

Superfight '85 may have been announced last December, but in a way, it's been approaching for several years.

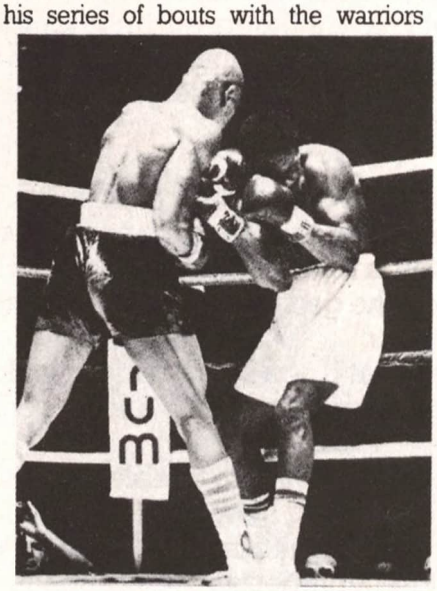
HAGLER'S CRITICAL CONTESTS



Monroe outslicks Hagler

L 10 Willie Monroe, March 9, 1976: In the second of his five Philly Wars, the 21-year-old Hagler is given a thorough fistic education by "The Worm" en route to dropping a unanimous decision. Two months earlier, Hagler had lost a controversial decision to Boogaloo Watts, but there is no uproar over this verdict. Monroe, usually a jab-and-dance master, decides to become the aggressor, and he dominates the infighting with crisp combinations. Hagler is rocked several times with rights, and his mouthpiece is blasted into the crowd in the fifth round. Afterward, Hagler sports a severely swollen face, and he tells the press, "I can see a great future a head of me, but I still have a few things to learn."

KO 8 Cyclone Hart, September 14, 1976: "Three strikes and you're out," promoter Russell Peltz warns Goody and Pat Petronelli, Hagler's handlers, before Hagler's third Philly War, but Marvelous isn't about to whiff and end his series of bouts with the warriors from The City of Brotherly Love. When Hart taunts Hagler during a workout, the showdown becomes a genuine grudge match. Hagler proves too versatile for the strong but limited Hart as he drops Cyclone in the third with a short right, and stuns him in the fourth. Hagler's killer instinct is not yet developed, and he fails to finish his helpless foe in the eighth. The iron-chinned Hagler withstands a vicious hook at the close of that round, and then after an argument in the corner, Hart fails to come out for the ninth. The ending is bizarre and inexplicable, though Hagler theorizes, "He knew he was hurt and he quit."

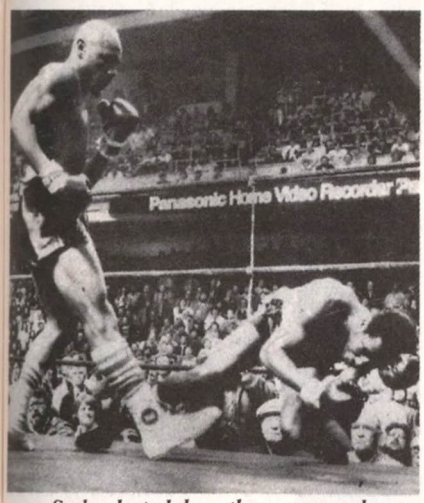


Hagler quiets The Cyclone

W 10 Bennie Briscoe, August 24, 1978: Hagler's final Philly War is in many ways his most impressive.

Battle of The Baldies

Though "Bad Bennie" is 35 years old, he is still considered to be a formidable opponent with dangerous punching power. Before a record Spectrum crowd of 14,930 Briscoe fanatics, Hagler coolly controls the action by alternating between boxing and slugging. A butt opens a hideous gash over Hagler's right eye in the third, but Marvelous never fades. Though the decision is surprisingly close (49-43, 48-43, and 47-44), many ringsiders feel that Hagler won all 10 rounds. Years later, Briscoe would say that Hagler was a tougher opponent than former middleweight great Carlos Monzon, to whom Briscoe had also lost, in 1972.



Seales lasted less than a round

KO 1 Sugar Ray Seales, February 3, 1979: Though the writers consider Hagler to be the uncrowned champion, he is still unable to secure a bout with middleweight king Hugo Corro. And because of his limited TV exposure, he is still a stranger to some of the nation's fight fans. He keeps active and acquaints himself to the viewers with an easy blitzing of old nemesis Seales on CBS. In 1974, Hagler had won a decision over Seales and then drew with him in Sugar's backyard of Seattle. In their third match, Seales never has the opportunity to land a single punch as Hagler swarms over him and blasts him to the canvas three times. The bout is over in 1:26 and fans who had previously been unfamiliar with the enormously talented Hagler have been introduced to him in a most unforgettable way. Afterward, Hagler grabs the ring microphone and says, "Championship '79, championship '79." He is roaring toward the title.

While Hagler coasted, Vito rallied

D 15 Vito Antuofermo, November 30, 1979: After years of being denied a title shot, Hagler's big night has finally arrived. The oddsmakers are so sure that he will capitalize on his opportunity that they have installed him as a 4-1 favorite over Antuofermo, the conqueror of Corro. But after taking an early lead, Hagler tires and he begins coasting in the latter stages of the bout. Antuofermo is relentless in his pursuit, however, and the Italian's mauling and brawling tactics put Hagler on the defensive and apparently impresses the judges. Though many ringsiders feel Hagler did enough to deserve the decision, the contest is ruled a draw. Hagler later vows that he will concentrate on kayoing his future opponents to avoid having to rely on the judges.

Coronation in Britain

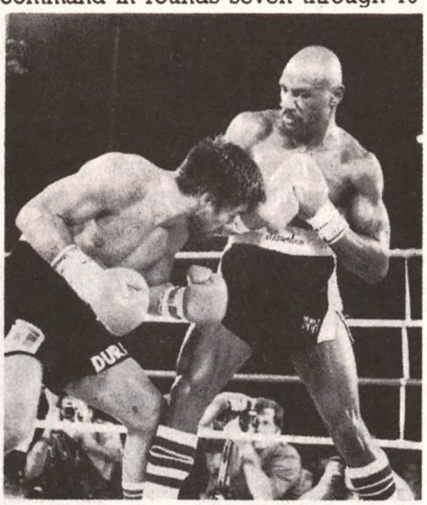
KO 3 Alan Minter, September 27, 1980: Nearly all experts consider Hagler to be the best middleweight in the universe by the time he receives his second title shot, but he still has to beat the slick, stylish Minter, just to make it official. In only three rounds, Marvin proves that he is indeed the best as he crafitly lures the normally patient boxer into a slugfest. With his harder, sharper punches, a relentless Hagler inflicts two cuts over Minter's left eye in the first round, and then opens an ugly, deep gash over the same eye in the third, and the massacre is wisely halted.

A prime kayo of Sibson

KO 6 Tony Sibson, February 11, 1983: The peak. In his sixth title defense, Marvin is at his very best. In fact, he looks *Mah-velous.* The muscular and rugged Sibson charges into Worcester, Massachusetts, intent on bringing the crown back to merry old England, but his hopes are frozen by two blizzards: one that blankets the area with several inches of snow, and the other the fearsome fists of Hagler. Sibson had never been dropped or cut in his 51 previous bouts, but his streak ends when he repeatedly rushes the poised champion and runs head-on into Hagler's razor-sharp combinations. Sibson is cut over both eyes in the fifth, and is dropped twice before the action is halted in the sixth.

W 15 Roberto Duran, November 10, 1983: After 10 years in the fight game and 61 bouts, Hagler finally receives the superfight and super purse that he

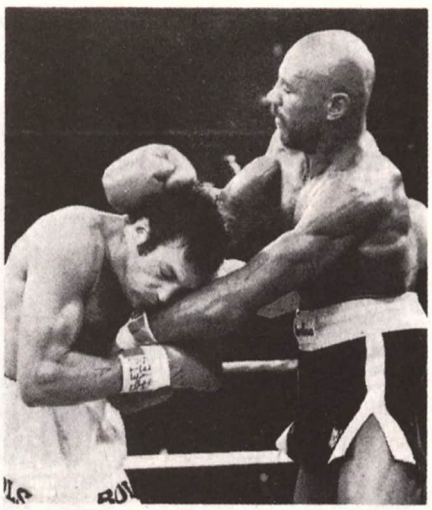
always desired. He collects $5 million dollars for the fight that is supposed to confirm his greatness. Though Hagler, the natural middleweight, has the edge in strength, he is curiously tentative and overly respectful of the three-time titlist. Hagler takes command in rounds seven through 10



A legend lasts 15 rounds

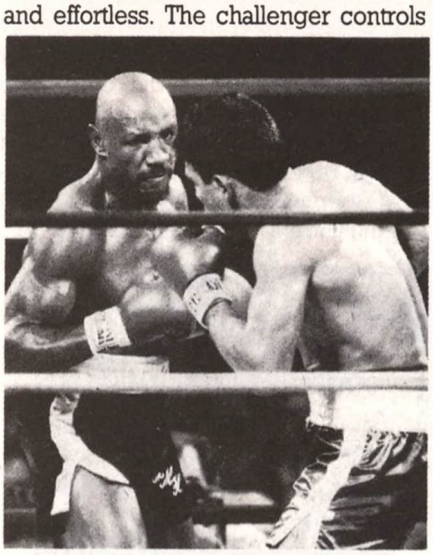
with a furious two-fisted attack, but then foolishly begins dancing in the 11th, and allows Duran to mount his own offensive. Though Hagler seems to be clearly ahead after 13 rounds, two judges have him trailing, and it takes a spirited rally in the 14th and 15th to save his title. Duran is the only challenger who the champion has failed to kayo, and following the marvel-less performance, Hagler's image of invincibility is severely tarnished.

KO 10 Juan Roldan, March 30, 1984: Is Hagler really slipping? That's what many ringsiders are wondering after watching the champion struggle with the underdog Argentine strongman. In the first 10 seconds of action, Roldan pulls Hagler down and the fall is ruled a knockdown, the first of the champion's career. Throughout the opening two rounds, Roldan repeatedly lands hard shots to Hagler's head and body, and his tricky head feints leave Hagler off-balance and missing. Hagler loses the first two rounds on all three judges' scorecards, but in the third, the momentum instantly shifts. A right uppercut instantly closes Roldan's right eye, and a hard followup right decks him. He never seriously threatens again, and is eventually decked and stopped in the 10th. But since when does a *one-eyed*, limited challenger like Roldan last *10* rounds with Hagler?



Hagler struggled with Roldan

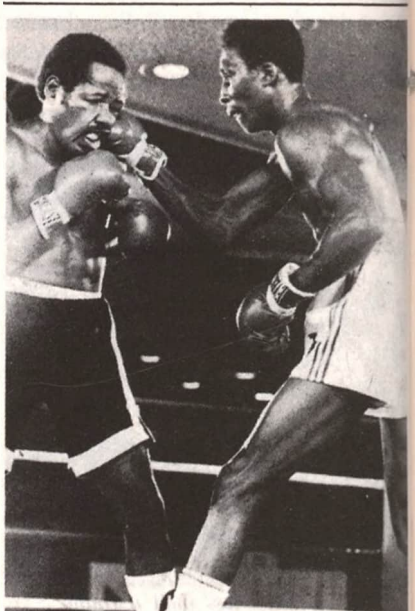
KO 3 Mustafa Hamsho, October 19, 1984: To erase the stigma of the Duran and Roldan fights, and to avoid being completely overshadowed in 1984 by the achievements of Hearns, Hagler knows it is imperative that he stop the Syrian quickly. Hamsho lasted 11 bloody rounds with Marvelous in 1981, but this time the destruction is swift and effortless. The challenger controls



Three-round Garden wipeout

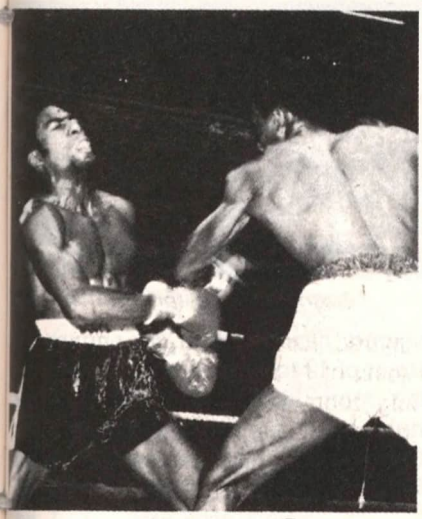
the first round, but makes the mistake of intentionally butting Hagler. The incensed champion quickly begins stringing together combinations in the second, and then in the third, he becomes the first man to floor Hamsho when he decks him with two left hooks and two hard rights. Hamsho rises, but is quickly dropped for the final time by a right hook. Hagler's victory is a sweet one because it comes in his Madison Square Garden debut and in front of a very interested spectator—Mr. T. Hearns.

HEARNS' CRITICAL CONTESTS



From prospect to contender

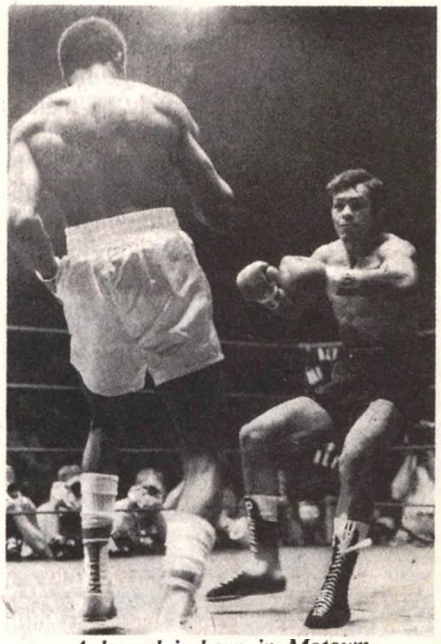
KO 6 Harold Weston Jr., May 20, 1979: The Hit Man's first network TV outing is a minor disappointment. Throughout the first five rounds, the stocky Weston is able to get inside Hearns' long arms and score with short punches to the head and body. Hearns repeatedly lands his powerful right, and though it never drops the New Yorker, it gradually closes his left eye. Weston is unable to leave his stool for the seventh round, but it is because his *right* eye is injured. (He later required surgery for a detached retina.) In raising his record to 19-0 with 18 kayos, Hearns impresses few viewers who tuned in after hearing stories of his incredible power. But he has notched a win over a rated contender who had gone 15 rounds with WBC welterweight king Wilfred Benitez only two months earlier.



Hearns overpowers Curry

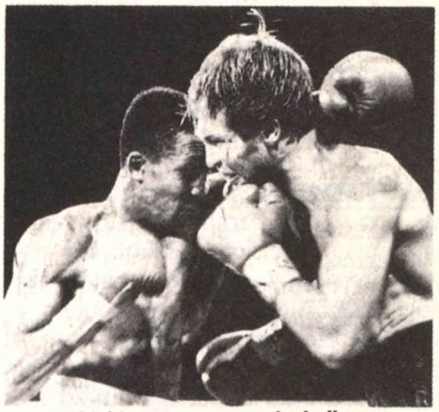
KO 3 Bruce Curry, June 28, 1979: Even in his early days as a performer, Hearns realized that you can't leave the fans disappointed twice in a row. Two months after the battle with Weston, Hearns makes his second national TV appearance in an exciting slugfest with Curry. During a clash of heads in the third round, Hearns is gashed above the left eye and thus forced to try desperately for a kayo. He furiously increases the pace and floors the Texan with a blistering series of bombs. Curry gets up, but he is a beaten fighter. ("I could see the fear in his eyes," Hearns would say later.) A right to the chin drops him on his back and he is counted out. In an instant, Hearns has displayed his tremendous heart, and shown just how destructive his lethal fists can be. His reputation is growing quickly.

KO 2 Pipino Cuevas, August 2, 1980: Hearns sure looked awesome in most of the 28 wins that lead up to his first title shot, but is he championship material? When he meets the explosive WBA welterweight king, Cuevas, we find out in less than two rounds. As the "Motor City Cobra" spears the Mexican with a sharp left jab in the opening three minutes, it is clear that the 5'8" Cuevas cannot reach his taller opponent with his patented left hook. In the second, Hearns unleashes two thunderous rights. The first one wobbles Cuevas, and the second one drops him on his face for the first time ever. He gets up, but his handlers immediately signal surrender. The next day, Dave Jacobs, then-trainer of Sugar Ray Leonard, is asked to evaluate Hearns' breathtaking performance. Says Jacobs, "Last night, no welterweight in the world could have beaten him."



A legend is born in Motown

KO 13 Randy Shields, April 25, 1981: Hearns' second defense of his WBA welterweight crown is by far one of his least impressive fights. Against the durable and crafty Shields, the confused Hit Man attempts to box, then tries to bomb, and finally tries to combine boxing and slugging. "Each style only worked for a short time until Randy figured it out," Hearns would say later. "I don't know what finally worked." What finally works is a long left jab that keeps Shields off-balance and opens cuts over both of his eyes.



Shields was a rugged challenger

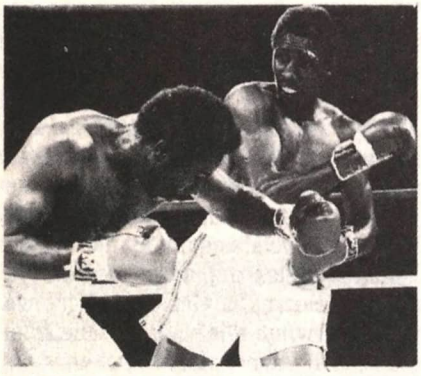
When the wounds don't stop bleeding, the bout is halted in the 13th round.

KO by 14 Sugar Ray Leonard, September 16, 1981: Hearns' reacts admirably to the pressures that his first superfight puts on him outside the ring, but he unravels as soon as the "Sugar Man" applies the pressure inside the ropes. Hearns is well ahead after five rounds, when a left hook to the ribs in the sixth round visibly weakens him. He never fully recovers from the blow, but he does switch from banger to boxer in the next several rounds and manages to build up a seemingly insurmountable lead on all three scorecards. But in the 13th, Leonard rallies

Hearns' aura dissolved against Sugar

to drop him, and then in the 14th, a right hand wobbles Hearns and a two-fisted flurry renders him helpless against the ropes. The fight is stopped and Leonard becomes the undisputed welterweight king. In his quest for superstardom, Hearns has suffered a heartbreaking setback.

W 10 Ernie Singletary, December 11, 1981: The Hit Man wastes little time brooding over the loss to Leonard, returning to action three months later. Hearns, weighing 155, suffers the worst cut of his career in the first round when he is gashed above the left eye. Though blood frequently drips into the eye, he is able to effectively control the bout with his rapier-like jab and crunching right. But, surprisingly, Hearns is unable to floor his



Middleweight debut vs. Singletary

overmatched opponent. Singletary is rocked in several rounds, and bloodied and battered relentlessly in the 10th, but he never goes down. Afterward, Hearns explains his power shortage by saying, "I'll look better and hit better when I put on a little more weight. It'll put power in my right hand."

KO 8 Jeff McCracken, July 25, 1982: Hearns weighs in at a career high of 159¼ pounds, but the extra bulk doesn't enhance his power; instead it nullifies some of his speed. He starts fast, dropping the Californian twice in the second round, but then begins to tire badly. By the sixth, he is arm weary and moving very sluggishly. McCracken hurts him with a right to the head in the seventh, and Hearns wakes up and pummels his foe with a furious barrage of blows in the eighth. Several thudding body shots drive McCracken to the ropes, and a wick-

Hearns tired against McCracken

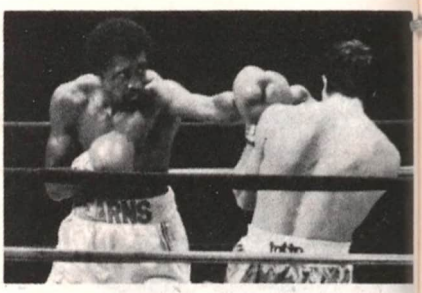
ed flurry forces a stoppage. But Hearns has been unable to drop McCracken again. Is Hearns' punching power diminished at the higher weight?

W 15 Wilfred Benitez, December 3, 1982: Before the fight, the Hit Man tells the press, "I expect it will go 15, and I'm going to give him a boxing lesson." The bout unfolds exactly as Hearns predicts as the Motor City Cobra controls the tempo of the bout and Benitez concentrates solely on making Hearns miss. In the fifth, the Puerto Rican's gloves touch the floor after he absorbs a stunning right, and the move is ruled a knockdown. Hearns rocks his rival badly again in the sixth, but then hurts his right wrist in the

Winning a second world title

eighth. He is forced to jab and move for the remainder of the contest, and he skillfully piles up points while keeping Benitez off-balance and unable to shift momentum. Two judges tab Hearns the winner, but a third judge scores it a draw. A surprised Hearns comments, "He must have been asleep."

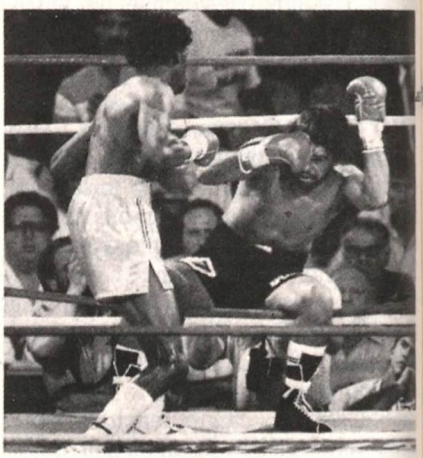
W 12 Luigi Minchillo, February 11, 1984: In his first bout since he injured his hand against Murray Sutherland seven months earlier, Hearns defends his super welter crown against the rugged Italian brawler. Before a hometown crowd of 18,453 in Detroit's Joe Louis Arena, the Hit Man shakes off his rust while earning a fairly easy unanimous decision. Though his defense is sloppy, and he is unable to floor his challenger, Hearns' outing is a big hit. He bodypunches effectively, displays an ability to fight on the ropes, and most important, throws the right hand fearlessly. And the often-



Hearns tunes against Minchillo

injured hand is able to endure the strain of 12 tough rounds. In the dressing room later, Hearns stares at his right hand for several minutes and then confidently tells manager-trainer Emanuel Steward, "It's back."

KO 2 Roberto Duran, June 15, 1984: Writers scoff when Hearns coolly predicts a second-round kayo over the man with the hands and *chin* of stone. But Hearns comes out of his corner flatfooted and aggressive, and it is quickly apparent that Duran is unable to get past the Hit Man's jab. Hearns suckers Duran into looking for the jab to the body, and then bombs him with rights to the head. "Cholo," who has been floored only twice in 81 previous bouts, is dropped twice in the first round, and then leveled with a bonecrunching right in the second. The fight is stopped instantly. The sight of the mighty Duran laying prone on the canvas is enough to convince many experts that Hearns is now ready to capture the middleweight



Overwhelming a legend

crown. At the postfight press conference, the Hit Man tells reporters, "Hagler is shaking like a leaf on a tree."

The Professional Record Of Marvelous Marvin Hagler

	1973	
May 18	Terry Ryan, Brockton	KO 2
July 25	Sonny Williams, Boston	W 6
Aug. 8	Muhammad Smith, Boston	KO 2
Oct. 6	Don Wigfall, Brockton	W 8
Oct. 26	Cove Green, Brockton	KO 4
Nov. 18	Cocoa Kid, Brockton	KO 2
Dec. 7	Manny Freitas, Portland, ME	KO 1
Dec. 18	Jim Redford, Boston	KO 4
	1974	
Feb. 5	Bob Harrington, Boston	KO 5
Apr. 5	Tracy Morrison, Boston	KO 8
May 4	Jim Redford, Brockton	KO 2
May 30	Curtis Phillips, Portland	KO 5
July 16	Robert Williams, Boston	KO 3
Aug. 13	Peachy Davis, New Bedford, MA	KO 1
Aug. 30	Sugar Ray Seales, Boston	W 10
Oct. 29	Morris Jordan, New Bedford	KO 4
Nov. 16	George Green, Brockton	KO 1
Nov. 26	Sugar Ray Seales, Seattle	D 10
Dec. 20	D.C. Walker, Boston	KO 2
	1975	
Feb. 15	Don Wigfall, Brockton	KO 5
Mar. 31	Joey Blair, Boston	KO 2
Apr. 14	Jimmy Owens, Boston	W 10
May 24	Jimmy Owens, Brockton	W Disq. 6
Aug. 7	Jesse Bender, Portland	KO 1
Sept. 30	Lamont Lovelady, Boston	KO 7
Dec. 20	Johnny Baldwin, Boston	W 10
	1976	
Jan. 13	Bobby Watts, Philadelphia	L 10
Feb. 7	Matt Donovan, Boston	KO 2
Mar. 9	Willie Monroe, Philadelphia	L 10
June 2	Bob Smith, Taunton, MA	KO 5
Aug. 3	D.C. Walker, Providence	KO 6
Sept. 14	Cyclone Hart, Philadelphia	KO 8
Dec. 21	George Davis, Boston	KO 6
	1977	
Feb. 15	Willie Monroe, Boston	KO 12
Mar. 16	Reggie Ford, Boston	KO 3
June 10	Roy Jones, Hartford	KO 3
Aug. 23	Willie Monroe, Philadelphia	KO 2
Sept. 24	Ray Phillips, Boston	KO 7
Oct. 15	Jim Henry, Providence	W 10
Nov. 26	Mike Colbert, Boston	KO 12
	1978	
Mar. 4	Kevin Finnegan, Boston	KO 9
Apr. 7	Doug Demmings, Los Angeles	KO 8
May 13	Kevin Finnegan, Boston	KO 7
Aug. 24	Bennie Briscoe, Philadelphia	W 10
Nov. 11	Willie Warren, Boston	KO 7
	1979	
Feb. 3	Sugar Ray Seales, Boston	KO 1
Mar. 12	Bob Patterson, Providence	KO 3
May 26	Jamie Thomas, Portland	KO 3
June 30	Norberto Cabrera, Monte Carlo	KO 8
Nov. 30	Vito Antuofermo, Las Vegas (For World Middleweight Title)	D 15
	1980	
Feb. 16	Loucif Hamani, Portland	KO 2
Apr. 20	Bobby Watts, Portland	KO 2
May 17	Marcos Geraldo, Las Vegas	W 10
Sept. 27	Alan Minter, London (Wins World Middleweight Title)	KO 3
	1981	
Jan. 17	Fulgencio Obelmejias, Boston (Retains World Middleweight Title)	KO 8
June 13	Vito Antuofermo, Boston (Retains World Middleweight Title)	KO 5
Oct. 3	Mustafa Hamsho, Rosemont, IL (Retains World Middleweight Title)	KO 11
	1982	
Mar. 7	Caveman Lee, Atlantic City (Retains World Middleweight Title)	KO 1
Oct. 31	Fulgencio Obelmejias, San Remo (Retains World Middleweight Title)	KO 5
	1983	
Feb. 11	Tony Sibson, Worcester, MA (Retains World Middleweight Title)	KO 6
May 27	Wilford Scypion, Providence (Retains World Middleweight Title)	KO 4
Nov. 10	Roberto Duran, Las Vegas (Retains World Middleweight Title)	W 15
	1984	
Mar. 30	Juan Roldan, Las Vegas (Retains World Middleweight Title)	KO 10
Oct. 19	Mustafa Hamsho (Retains World Middleweight Title)	KO 3

RECORD:	FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DREW	KO
	64	60	2	2	50

The Professional Record Of Thomas Hearns

	1977	
Nov. 25	Jerome Hill, Detroit	KO 2
Dec. 7	Jerry Strickland, Mt. Clemens, MI	KO 3
Dec. 16	Willie Wren, Detroit	KO 3
	1978	
Jan. 29	Anthony House, Detroit	KO 2
Feb. 10	Robert Adams, Detroit	KO 3
Feb. 17	Billy Goodwin, Sagninaw	KO 2
Mar. 17	Ray Fields, Detroit	KO 2
Mar. 31	Tyrone Phelps, Saginaw	KO 3
June 8	Jimmy Rothwell, Detroit	KO 1
July 20	Raul Aguirre, Detroit	KO 3
Aug. 3	Eddie Marcelle, Detroit	KO 2
Sept. 7	Bruce Finch, Detroit	KO 3
Oct. 26	Pedro Rojas, Detroit	KO 1
Dec. 9	Rudy Barro, Detroit	KO 4
	1979	
Jan. 13	Clyde Gray, Detroit	KO 10
Jan. 31	Sammy Rookard, Detroit	KO 8
Mar. 3	Segundo Murillo, Detroit	KO 8
Apr. 3	Alfonso Hayman, Philadelphia	W 10
May 20	Harold Weston Jr., Las Vegas	KO 6
June 28	Bruce Curry, Detroit	KO 3
Aug. 23	Mao De La Rosa, Detroit	KO 2
Sept. 22	Jose Figueroa, Los Angeles	KO 3
Oct. 18	Saensak Muangsurin, Detroit	KO 3
Nov. 30	Mike Colbert, New Orleans	W 10
	1980	
Feb. 3	Fighting Jim Richards, Las Vegas	KO 3
Mar. 2	Angel Espada, Detroit	KO 4
Mar. 31	Santiago Valdez, Las Vegas	KO 1
May 3	Eddie Gazo, Detroit	KO 1
Aug. 2	Pipino Cuevas, Detroit (Wins WBA Welterweight Title)	KO 2
Dec. 6	Luis Primera, Detroit (Retains WBA Welterweight Title)	KO 6
	1981	
Apr. 25	Randy Shields, Phoenix (Retains WBA Welterweight Title)	KO 13
June 25	Pablo Baez, Houston (Retains WBA Welterweight Title)	KO 4
Sept. 16	Ray Leonard, Las Vegas (For Undisputed Welterweight Title)	KO by 14
Dec. 11	Ernie Singletary, Nassau, Bahamas	W 10
	1982	
Feb. 27	Marcos Geraldo, Las Vegas	KO 1
July 25	Jeff McCracken, Detroit	KO 8
Dec. 3	Wilfred Benitez, New Orleans (Wins WBC Super Welterweight Title)	W 15
	1983	
July 10	Murray Sutherland, Atlantic City (Non-Title Bout)	W 10
	1984	
February 11	Luigi Minchillo, Detroit (Retains WBC Super Welterweight Title)	W 12
June 15	Roberto Duran, Las Vegas (Retains WBC Super Welterweight Title)	KO 2
September 15	Fred Hutchings, Saginaw, MI (Retains WBC Super Welterweight Title)	KO 3

RECORD:	FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DREW	KO
	41	40	1	0	34

VITAL STATISTICS

HAGLER		HEARNS
78%	**Knockout Percentage**	83%
20 (6/2/76-11/30/79)	**Longest Winning Streak**	32 (11/25/77-9/16/81)
35 (6/2/76-present)	**Most Consecutive Fights Without A Loss**	32 (11/25/77-9/16/81)
10 (10/26/73-8/30/74)	**Longest Kayo Streak**	17 (11/25/77-4/3/79)
1 (vs. Roldan)	**Knockdowns Suffered**	2 (vs. Leonard, Benitez)
373	**Total Rounds Fought**	206
5.8 Rounds	**Average Distance Of Fights**	5.0 Rounds
11-0-1 (10 kayos)	**Record In Championship Fights**	9-1-0 (6 kayos)

PREVIEW & ANALYSIS

An extensive, analytical forecast of upcoming superfights and critical showdowns

HAGLER vs. HEARNS

Showdown In The Desert

It was last December 13, and the scene was the Waldorf Astoria in New York City. Top Rank's Bob Arum was standing at the podium and dozens of reporters were surprisingly sitting in silence (a rare occurence).

"Boxing has been under attack lately, but on April 15th, boxing will put its best foot forward," Arum told the crowded ballroom. "The two greatest fighters in the ring today will be fighting each other and millions of people will be interested. It will be a referendum for boxing." With those words, Superfight '85 was born.

Regardless of the criticism that boxing has received from the American Medical Association and sportscaster Howard Cosell, on Income Tax Day, Marvelous Marvin Hagler and Thomas Hearns are going to pull on their trunks, lace up their gloves, and exit their trailers in the parking lot of Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. And we dare anyone to not be interested in what transpires after those long, lonely walks suddenly lead both of them to the center of the ring. It's Hagler vs. Hearns, and for once, a fight will be sold on its competitiveness and the two combatants' genuine dislike for each other, not on gimmicks and phony hype. "They'll be talking about this one for many, many years," Hagler's manager, Pat Petronelli, predicts.

We agree wholeheartedly.

MARVIN HAGLER
Brockton, Massachusetts

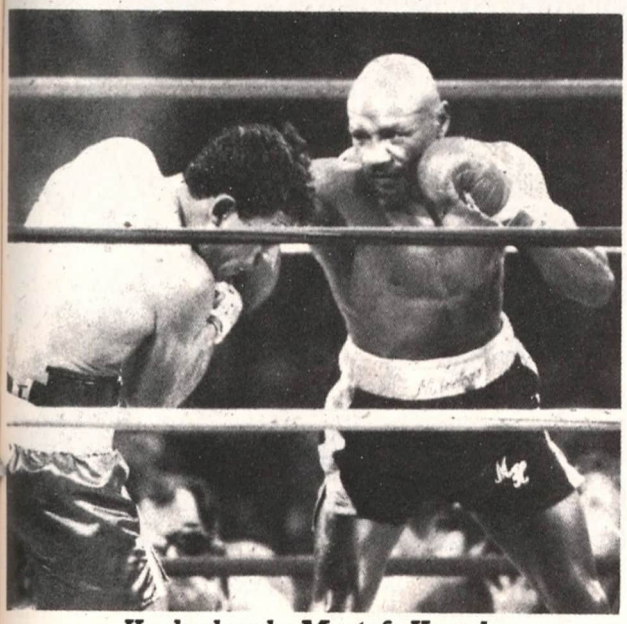
THOMAS HEARNS
Detroit, Michigan

RECORD AND WORLD RATING

Has compiled an impressive mark of 60-2-2 with 50 kayos in his 12-year career . . . Won the middleweight crown on September 27, 1980, with a third-round kayo of Alan Minter, and has made 10 successful defenses, nine by kayo . . . Is unbeaten 35 straight bouts since dropping a 10-round decision to Willie Monroe in March 1976 . . . Rated as the best pound-for-pound fighter in the sport by *World Boxing*.

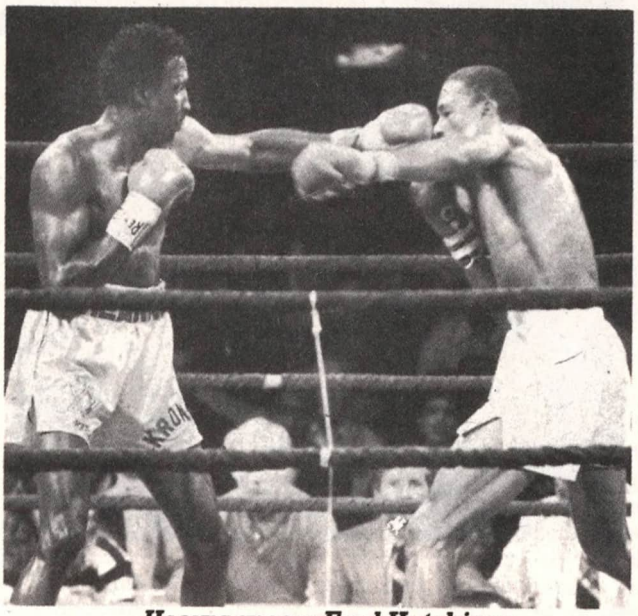
His three victories in 1984 raised his record to 40-1 with 34 kayos . . . Held the WBA welterweight title from August 1980 to September 1981 . . . Won the WBC super welterweight crown with a 15-round decision over Wilfred Benitez in December 1982 and has made three successful defenses . . . Ranked second to Hagler in *World Boxing's* pound-for-pound ratings.

PREVIOUS FIGHT



Hagler bombs Mustafa Hamsho

His Madison Square Garden debut earned him four-star reviews as he needed just three rounds to massacre top-rated Mustafa Hamsho last October 19 . . . Didn't cut the Syrian's face to shreds as he did en route to stopping him in 11 rounds in their 1981 meeting, but completed a swifter, more thorough destruction this time . . . Floored the stocky challenger for the first time ever with two left hooks and two rights in the third round . . . After Hamsho climbed to his feet, savagely pursued him and finally finished him with a screaming right hook . . . Later told reporters, "You saw me at my best when I came to New York."



Hearns spears Fred Hutchings

Proved that his stunning kayo of Roberto Duran was no fluke when he bombed out Fred Hutchings in three rounds last September 15 in Saginaw, Michigan . . . Displayed the awesome power, confidence, and killer instinct that was his trademark as a welterweight . . . Dropped the talented Californian twice with rights in the first round, and then staggered him with a fierce barrage of punches that forced referee Arthur Mercante to stop the butchery in the third . . . Commented afterward, "I know Marvin Hagler was watching, and he's having a very hard time thinking clearly now."

AGE

Lists his age as 30, though some skeptics believe he may actually be two years older . . . Still retains sharp reflexes and decent speed, but has been getting hit more often than he did earlier in his career . . . May be the most superbly conditioned fighter in the game . . . Proved his dependable stamina against Duran when he rallied to outpunch his tired challenger in the 14th and 15th rounds . . . Unlike other aging fighters, never has trouble making the weight . . . Often weighs in at two or three pounds below the 160-pound limit.

Turned 26 on October 18 . . . Is an exceptional natural athlete who is proficient in other sports . . . Possesses (Motor City) Cobra-like reflexes and breathtaking speed . . . Has questionable endurance as a middleweight . . . Weighed 159¼ for his 1982 battle with Jeff McCracken, but faded as early as the sixth round . . . Assuming his body can comfortably adjust to the climb to middleweight, he should be at his physical peak for Superfight '85.

PHYSICAL EQUIPMENT

His height (5'9") and reach (70") put him at a distinct disadvantage in this encounter . . . As the smaller man, he will be forced to work his way inside of Hearns' long arms or he will be easily outboxed from a distance . . . Has been known to use his shaven head as a battering ram . . . His thickly-muscled upper body and strong, tireless legs are testimony to his inhuman training regimen . . . Regardless of the quality of his opponent, is always in excellent condition.

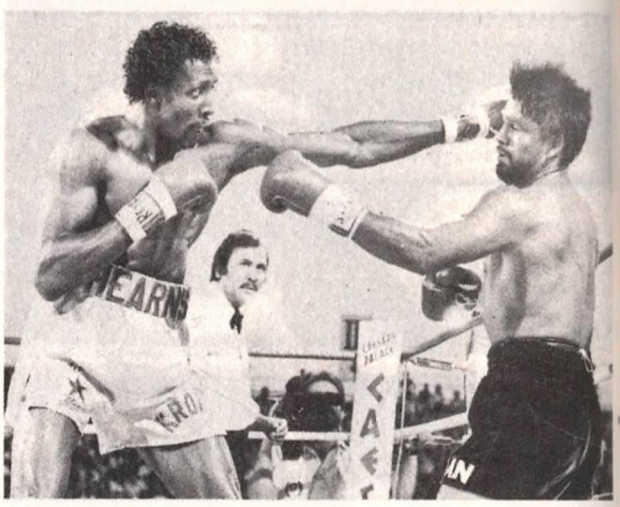
Has filled out in the past three years and no longer resembles the skeleton whose meatless ribs provided Sugar Ray Leonard with such an inviting target . . . Stands 6'2" and has a reach of 78 inches . . . Like Hagler, he keeps his body tightly muscled and free of flab by training intently for every outing . . . Has been plagued by injuries to his famed right hand in the past, but the hand has withstood the rigors of his last three bouts.

HAGLER VS. HEARNS: *SUPERFIGHT '85 PREVIEW*

HAGLER

HEARNS

COMMON OPPONENTS—MIKE COLBERT, MARCOS GERALDO, ROBERTO DURAN



Chased down the speedy Colbert and eventually scored a 12th-round kayo in their November 1977 showdown . . . Had some difficulty with rugged Marcos Geraldo and had to settle for a 10-round decision in May 1980 . . . Geraldo is one of only three men to go the distance with Hagler in the last six years . . . Disappointed fans, experts, and himself when he went the distance with Duran in November 1983 . . . By failing to kayo the legendary champion, didn't receive the acclaim and universal recognition that he desired.

Fought wily veteran Colbert in November 1979, and was extended to the 10-round distance . . . Colbert became only the second opponent that Hearns failed to kayo in his first 24 bouts . . . Stopped Geraldo in one round in February 1982, but some experts, including referee Joey Curtis, insist that the Mexican didn't put forth an honest effort . . . Unlike Hagler, used *his* fight with Duran, in June 1984 to enhance his image . . . Turned boxing's biggest bully into a pussycat and reestablished his own reputation as an executioner with a swift, brutal kayo.

STYLE

Is a masterful counterpuncher, but will have to initiate the action in Superfight '85 if he is to overcome Hearns' physical advantages and avoid being outboxed . . . Is virtually unbeatable on the inside . . . Is adept at switching between his natural southpaw stance and an orthodox stance . . . Throws extremely effective combinations . . . Rarely wastes punches . . . Seems to always hit his foe with at least one or two blows everytime he launches a flurry to the head or body . . . Utilizes a fine right jab to set up his attack . . . Doesn't have devastating kayo power, but overwhelms opponents by hitting them with sharp, solid punches from several different angles.

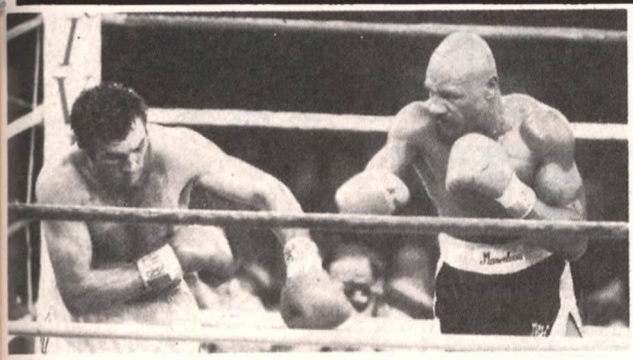
Earned his nickname of Hit Man and gained his popularity through his string of kayos, and is considered to be primarily a puncher . . . Proved in the Leonard and Benitez fights, however, that he is an excellent boxer who can control the tempo of a bout from the outside . . . Uses his whipping left jab to score points, keep onrushing opponents at bay, and set up his potent right . . . Is not particularly skilled at infighting, but against Luigi Minchillo, showed some improvement in fighting on the ropes . . . Because of its combination of speed and power, his right is one of the most damaging weapons in boxing . . . Will probably test Hagler's chin early, and then determine whether he will bomb or box.

DEFENSE

Is not an exceptional defensive strategist, but usually avoids absorbing punishment because opponents are unable to get past his combinations and deliver their own shots . . . Has good head movement, but was hit surprisingly easily by awkward Juan Roldan and slow Hamsho (in the rematch) . . . Is prone to cuts . . . Has a mass of scar tissue above both eyes from cuts suffered against Hamsho, Duran, Bennie Briscoe, and Vito Antuofermo . . . Owns boxing's best chin . . . Has never actually been floored in 64 bouts, though a slip against Roldan was ruled a knockdown.

Like Hagler, uses his offense as an effective defense . . . Against Minchillo, displayed the dangerous habit of dropping his hands by his sides and was clipped often by the light-hitting mauler . . . Has slick head and upper-body movement . . . Disregarding a trip against Benitez that was ruled a knockdown, has been decked only once, by Leonard . . . Has never really had his chin tested by a hard-hitting middleweight . . . May be vulnerable to a body attack if Hagler can maneuver inside . . . Has been cut by Minchillo, Murray Sutherland, Ernie Singletary, Bruce Curry, and Randy Shields.

QUALITY OF OPPOSITION



Roldan was durable, but outclassed

Has faced and beaten the best middleweights of the past decade . . . Began developing his skills in the small, smokey clubs of New England during the early '70s against unknowns like Don Wigfall and Tracy Morrison . . . Blossomed into a world class contender after engaging in his five "Philly Wars" from 1976 to 1978 . . . Battled the cream of the 160-pound ranks—Briscoe, Monroe, Bobby Watts, and Cyclone Hart, . . . Since winning the title, has virtually ravaged the middleweight division by defeating top contenders like Hamsho, Duran, Roldan, and Tony Sibson . . . Has scored kayoes to avenge defeats to Watts and Monroe, and draws with Antuofermo and Sugar Ray Seales.

Sutherland was a troublesome middleweight test

Has dominated the elite of the welterweight and junior middleweight classes, but has never faced a top 10 middleweight . . . Easily defeated middleweights McCracken, Singletary, and Sutherland, but didn't display the overwhelming power that was his trademark at the lower weights . . . Couldn't floor veterans Singletary and Sutherland, and needed eight rounds to finish McCracken, despite having him hurt several times in the early rounds . . . Turned back the challenge of 154-pounders Hutchings, Duran, and Minchillo . . . Has a big edge over Hagler in superfight experience . . . Was involved in four superfights (Leonard, Benitez, Duran, and Pipino Cuevas).

MOST IMPRESSIVE WIN

Was at his best in his annihilation of Minter . . . Refused to be intimidated by a hostile British crowd that roared hysterically for its countryman and would later turn ugly by throwing bottles at Hagler immediately after the bout after was stopped . . . Forced the normally patient, slick-boxing champion to trade bombs in ring center . . . Opened two cuts around Minter's left eye in the first, and then ripped a deep gash over the same eye in the third to force a halt of the bloodbath.

Hasn't looked impressive as a middleweight, but his best showing in the post-welterweight days was his destruction of the great Duran . . . Showed Duran no respect as he massacred the Panamanian with an unstoppable assault that combined blinding speed and unstoppable power . . . Faked Duran into looking for his jab and then pasted him with rights . . . Decked the rock-jawed Panamanian twice in the first round and dropped him face-first in the second to score the year's most shocking kayo.

INTANGIBLES

Will he display the tentativeness that he showed against Duran? How will he nullify Hearns' speed? Will his combinations be ineffective against such a tall opponent? Will he be forced to reach and lunge dangerously to connect with his target? Can he absorb Hearns' booming right? Will he be able to dictate the pace, and if so, will he feel comfortable in the role of the aggressor? If he is trailing on points, will the 12-round distance prevent him from mounting a late-round rally and keeping his title? Will his scar tissue be opened by Hearns' snapping jabs? Is he the same fearsome terror who ravaged Sibson, Fulgencio Obelmejias, and Wilfred Scypion, or has he slipped from his level of supremacy?

What will Hearns weigh—a comfortable 156 or 157, or a beefy 159 or 160? Hearns has been rumored to be ineffective against southpaws during training sessions. If so, how will he handle Hagler's frequent switches between the orthodox and southpaw stances? Will Hearns choose to slug or box patiently? Will he foolishly attempt to blow Hagler away early, or will he wait for openings to land his bombs? Has his body developed enough to be able to withstand Hagler's body blows? As a middleweight, does he have the stamina to battle effectively for 12 rounds against a foe as strong as Hagler? Is Hearns, who has once again become a powerhitter, overconfident? Will he cut? Can he absorb a middleweight's punch?

OUTCOME

While Thomas Hearns may be the superior fighter, he is not the superior *middleweight.* He hasn't yet proven that he cankayo, absorb the punch, or last 12 rounds in a grueling war with an exceptional 160-pounder. Hearns might be our choice against James Kinchen or James Shuler, but not against boxing's best pound-for-pound titlist. Look for Hagler to gain a 12-round unanimous decision in Marvelous fashion.

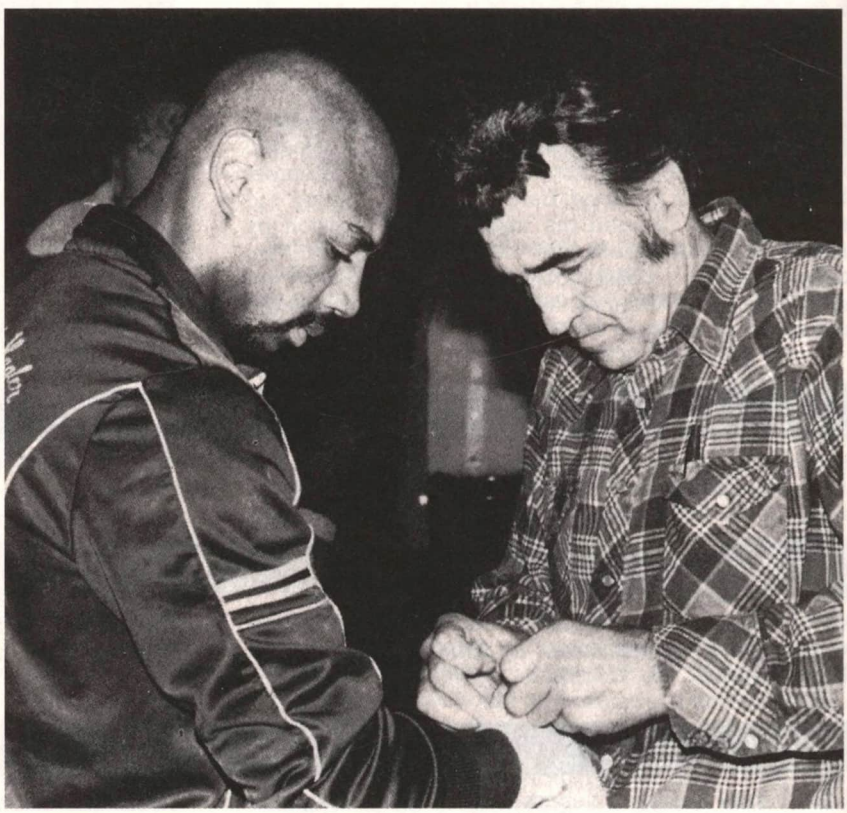
WHY MARVIN HAGLER WILL WIN

By Goody Petronelli

I BELIEVE THAT Marvin Hagler is the most versatile fighter in the world today. He's basically a southpaw, but he can turn around and fight right-handed easily, and he can knock you out from either position. He's a fine boxer, a boxer-puncher basically. Marvin has the big edge in strength in this fight because he was always a middleweight in the amateurs and the pros. He's a very strong middleweight who has the tools to do anything he wants in the ring. I don't believe the fight will go 12 rounds.

We're prepared for anything that Hearns does. I feel that Hearns will have to move to make the fight last, but we're prepared for Hearns to come out fast, he did that with Roberto Duran, and he's been known to do that often. If he does that, we'll end the fight quickly. Hearns has been shooting off his mouth about knocking out Marvin in the third round, and all that hype, but Marvin is the bigger man, and there's no question about it, Marvin will be the aggressor. Marvin will not get out there and box with him because we know how well Hearns can box. He proved that in the Sugar Ray Leonard fight. Tommy Hearns can dictate the fight, but if he wants to last in there, he'll have to get on his bicycle and run. And eventually he will be caught.

Hearns does have very quick hands, but Marvin's not the slowest guy in the world, you've seen how quick Marvin's hands are. And with all that speed, Hearns sacrifices something. A lot of times, he flicks his punches and you can't get power



throwing punches that way. He's got a nice right hand, but often he punches from too great of a distance. You must remember that Marvin has never been off his feet, as an amateur or a pro, but Hearns has. Leonard was no great puncher and you saw what he did to Hearns. Leonard hurt him to the body and hurt him on the chin. After he got hurt, Hearns had to get on his bicycle because he was no longer able to move Leonard.

I'm not taking anything away from Tommy, but you know the saying, a great big man will always beat a great little man. Tommy Hearns has never fought a man like Marvin Hagler. The middleweights he fought are guys like Ernie Singletary and Murray Sutherland, and they went the distance with him. Even Marvin's kid brother Robbie [Sims] fought Sutherland to a draw. I think Tommy Hearns is a great welterweight, and a great junior middleweight, he's a champion and he has earned his titles. But Marvin is an exceptional *middleweight* and he should go down as one of the greatest, if not *the* greatest, middleweight in history. □

WHY THOMAS HEARNS WILL WIN

By Emanuel Steward

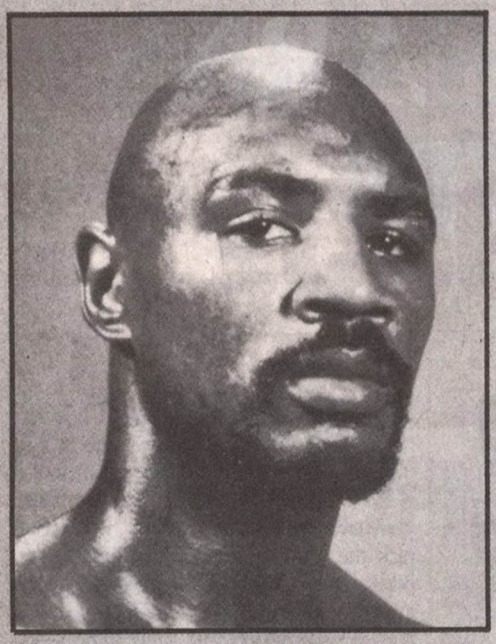
YOU DON'T SET tomato plants out in February; in other words, timing is important with anything. I think a 1982 fight against Tommy would have been great for Marvin, because at that time, he was probably unbeatable. Hearns would have been a test for him, but nobody would have beaten him. Now it's 1985 and I think that Marvin has slipped past his peak, he's on a slide now. Tommy has matured, he's become more physically and more psychologically proficient in the last 36 months, while Marvin has digressed. That is the basic foundation of why Tommy will win.

Hearns' style is all wrong for Hagler. Marvin has been fighting very basic, fundamental, straightforward fighters for the last eight years. With Hearns, it's a whole new ball game. He's fighting a kid who's got one element that he has not had to deal with, one factor that is important in any professional sport—speed. Until now, Hagler has always been faster than his opponents. Hearns knows how to use the jab to keep Hagler at bay and frustrate him, and he knows how to step back just before he punches, like he did against Duran, to make Marvin lunge and fall off-balance. Tommy will be coming out fast, the same way that he came out after Duran. Marvin may be the aggressor, but only for the first 30 seconds because Tommy is going to be getting three shots off to every one of Marvin's punches, and it's Tommy who's the one-punch knockout fighter. Duran told me that Marvin doesn't punch hard enough to hold Tommy off.

Tommy Hearns has a punch that can hurt Marvin, and he's going to hurt him early in the fight. Before the first round is over, Marvin's going to feel that power. And I don't give a damn what Goody Petronelli says, if Marvin gets hurt, he'll back up. I know his mental makeup. Hagler is going to be in with someone that he fears walking into. He was even hesitant about Duran and he got banged around a little bit by him, his eye was puffed up. And Duran's not even a puncher as a middleweight. I really have doubts about Marvin's heart. I look at that first Vito Antuofermo fight and when Vito started pushing him a little bit, I saw Marvin give. In the Duran fight, Marvin would get hit with one little penny-ante right hand and for the next three rounds, he was tentative. That is a characteristic in a person that never changes.

Hagler's biggest asset—his intensity—is going to destroy him. Marvin has tunnel vision. When anything goes off-track, he can't adjust. He can't handle adversity. I don't think this fight will go over three rounds. Hagler's been a great champion, but Hearns has physically and psychologically come into his own, and 1985 is the year for Tommy Hearns. □

HAGLER and HEARNS



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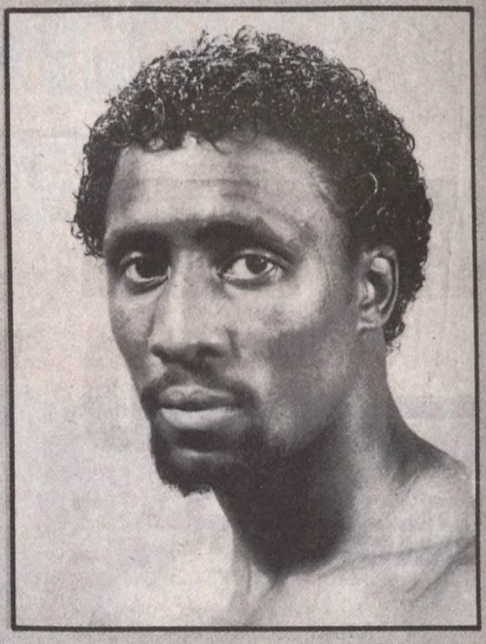


20 CRUCIAL QUESTIONS ON BOXING'S NEXT SUPERFIGHT

Probably the best aspect of boxing's superfights is that each one usually spawns another. When the thunderous right hand of WBC super welterweight king Thomas Hearns sent Roberto Duran crashing headfirst to the canvas in June, the "Hit Man" instantly established himself as the next contender for Marvin Hagler's undisputed middleweight crown. And sure enough, Hearns vs. Hagler is considered boxing's next spectacular event. The proposed thriller may still be several months away, but its anticipation is already raising some very pertinent questions in the minds of many serious fight fans.

1 Is this fight worth the enormous purses that both fighters will probably demand?
Yes and no. It is worth every cent the fighters want if you consider that it is the biggest potential superfight on boxing's horizon. If Hagler received $5 million for facing Roberto Duran, a blown-up lightweight, then he should certainly be paid at least as much to battle the man who is expected to be his most demanding challenger. And Hearns deserves a large purse, not only because he is probably the sport's hottest superstar, but also because he is the only man to ever massacre the legendary Duran. Yet, despite the fact that both men deserve top dollar, neither man can expect to walk away with millions unless they help hype the contest. Thus far, the two champions have done little to stir fan interest except to appear once on a network TV interview and trade insults. We need to hear many more verbal confrontations in the future (even if some of them are pure acting) to inflame our passions. It also couldn't hurt if Hagler and Hearns showed an interest in each other's fights. Since Hagler knew that he would be fighting the winner of the Hearns-Duran fight, why wasn't he in Las Vegas watching it? Hey Marvin, if you don't show any interest, how can you expect us to?

2 Should Hagler and Hearns fight tune-ups before they meet?
Absolutely. Neither fighter has the charisma of Muhammad Ali, Sugar Ray Leonard, or Gerry Cooney, so this fight won't be sold on personality. It will have to be marketed on competitiveness and be billed as a showdown between two destroyers. Fans are well aware of the sparkling achievements of each champion, but you'd be surprised at how quickly they'll forget if both stars do their Greta Garbo imitations and remain in seclusion for several months. Hagler looked dreary in his last two fights, wins over Duran and Juan Roldan, and Hearns hadn't displayed a trace of power in two years before he kayoed Duran. It will take impressive wins by both men to remind fans of their special qualities and make them hang out their windows screaming, "Give us Hagler and Hearns!" Just whom should both men fight to help increase their appeal? Well, Hagler sure would look good if he knocked down and stopped rugged Mustafa Hamsho early in their October rematch. The "Marvelous One" needed 11 rounds to halt the Syrian the first time, and Hamsho still has never been off his feet. And the Hit Man would improve his worth considerably if his sizzling fists succeeded in turning

Will Hagler again carve up Hamsho?

John Mugabi from a fearsome Beast to a harmless pussycat.

3 How will this superfight be televised?

Closed-circuit TV was considered a dying industry as far back as the mid-'70s, but then Leonard emerged and revived it briefly. When Leonard retired, it again became an unappealing and risky method for promoters to air a bout. Despite that fact, this one is destined for the theaters. HBO won't be able to afford the large purses that both fighters will receive, and fights of this magnitude are *never* shown on network TV anymore. Do you remember the last network superfight that you saw live in your living room? It was Leonard vs. Wilfred Benitez in *1979*. Start saving that $20 or $30 so that you'll be able to see it live at the theater. A few weeks later, you'll then be able to relax at home and watch a tape of the bout on HBO and then network TV.

4 What city will be fortunate enough to host this extravaganza?

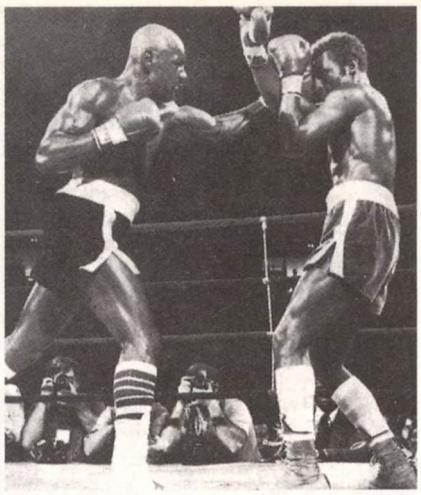
The edge has to go to Las Vegas. The desert paradise always seems to land the superfights. Caesars Palace loves the publicity and added business that a major bout provides, and it would have to be considered a frontrunner in the site sweepstakes. An alternate location: The Superdome in New Orleans. The stadium holds 74,000 people and would appeal to promoters who are interested in the added revenue that a large live gate would provide. Of course, it may not be easy getting the Hagler camp to agree to fighting in New Orleans. Since 1891, 14 champions have lost their title in the Gulf Coast seaport.

5 Do the two champions genuinely dislike each other?

Yes, this does qualify as a grudge match, and here's why: The two titlists were originally scheduled to meet in May 1982, but Hearns withdrew when he became dissatisfied with the financial arrangements. Hagler, however, claims the Hit Man chickened out, and he has been peeved at him ever since. He has been goading his challenger, insisting that Hearns has a yellow streak down his back and numerous weaknesses inside the ring. Hagler was incensed by Hearns' lack of respect last Novemebr after the Marvelous One outpointed Duran. Asked what he thought of Hagler, the Hit Man fired, "The same thing I always thought—nothing." Hagler was even further infuriated when Hearns wasted Duran in two rounds and boldly stated, "I can see Hagler shakin' like a leaf on a tree." On a network TV interview, an angry Hagler sarcastically told Hearns, "I'm still shakin', Tommy." He vowed to break "every bone in Tommy's body." Expect to read and hear more of the same type of threats and insults, which will boost ticket sales during the bout's buildup. Some may dismiss it as hype, but notice how these two guys are kept apart at press conferences. Also notice the icy, hateful stares they exchange. Each warrior is proud of his machismo and doesn't like the other thinking he is stronger and tougher. That conflict is the cause of the animosity. And while Hagler has voiced his dislike at each opportunity he receives, Hearns has sometimes been apathetic toward Hagler's comments and has been far more selective and damaging with his derogatory remarks. And he has remained calm, while Hagler has seemed unnerved during the verbal and psychological slugfests. Observers can only speculate if Hagler will be affected inside the ropes. Be sure, though, by the time these two climb into the ring, Hagler will probably be seething while Hearns will be his usual cool, calculating self—typical behavior of any Hit Man.

6 Who will be favored?

The boys in Vegas will make Hagler the favorite for a few reasons. The skilled technician is one of only two undisputed champions in boxing and has looked awesome throughout much of his title reign (specifically against Tony Sibson, Wilford Scypion, and Caveman Lee), with all but one of his nine defenses ending in a kayo. The Marvelous One is also a natural middle-

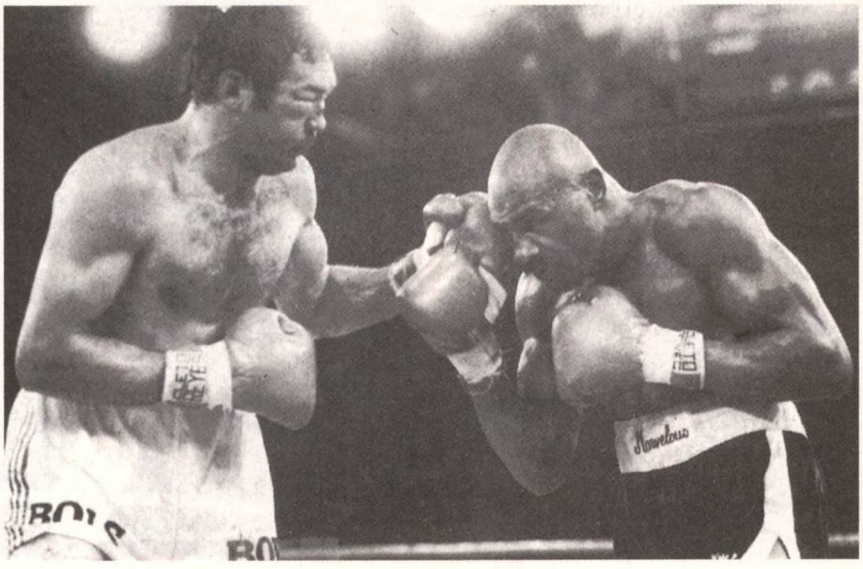


The prime Hagler halts Scypion

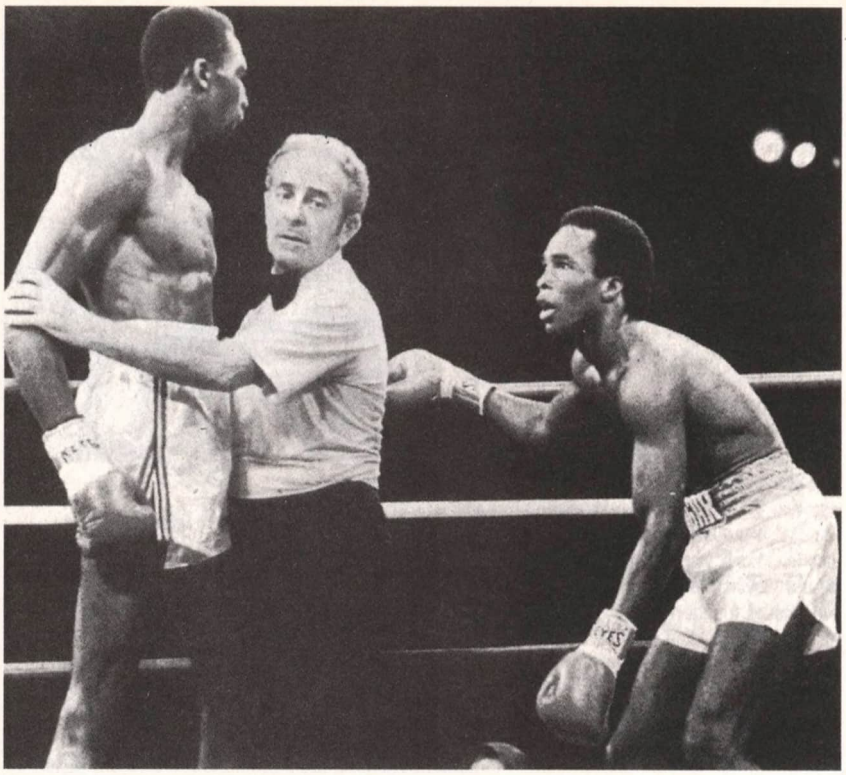
weight, and one of the finest-conditioned fighters in the game.

7 Which man is more apt to wilt under pressure?

Although Hagler has been a pro for four years longer than Hearns, and has fought 22 more bouts, it is the Hit Man who has been forced to perform under more pressure in his career. Hearns has been involved in three superfights (Leonard, Benitez, and Duran), while Hagler has fought in only one (Duran). Hearns remained cool and composed during all the prefight hysteria that surrounded his matchup with Leonard, thus he should be unaffected by the comparatively mild buildup that this fight will receive. While Hagler didn't seemed bothered by the hype that preceded his defense against Duran, his curious shifts of strategy during the bout indicated that he was somewhat uncomfortable in his new setting. Calvin Fussman, in a *Sport* magazine article, quoted a reporter who had watched Hagler's development as a fighter and compared his abilities with the construction of a wall. "One block was put in, secured, and then another was added until the wall was built.



Marvin wasn't so Marvelous against Juan Roldan



Hearns wasn't psyched out by Leonard's taunts

But I've always wondered what would happen if a block was smashed out of the middle? Would the rest of the wall tumble?" Although Hagler is a consummate professional, he showed against Duran that if one of those blocks is partially dislodged, he will become uncharacteristically rattled. And the knowledge that he is performing in front of the eyes of the world won't help him regain his composure.

8 Will Hagler fight as timidly as he did against Duran?

Hagler has one of the most dependable chins in boxing. He has only officially been down once in 62 fights (against Roldan) and even that "knockdown" was caused when the Marvelous One was cuffed behind the head and pulled down. If Hearns lands his right-handed bombs flush on Hagler's jaw and nothing happens, Hagler will become brazen and welcome exchanges. If Hearns' thunder shakes Hagler's chrome dome, however, expect the "Brockton Blackbuster" to keep his distance and patiently wait for opportunities to counterpunch. Hagler received much criticism for being overly cautious against Duran, and he probably would like to charge out of his corner and smash Hearns to the canvas quickly. But after watching Hearns dismantle Duran, Marvin may have decided that it would be wise to fight with his head and not with his heart.

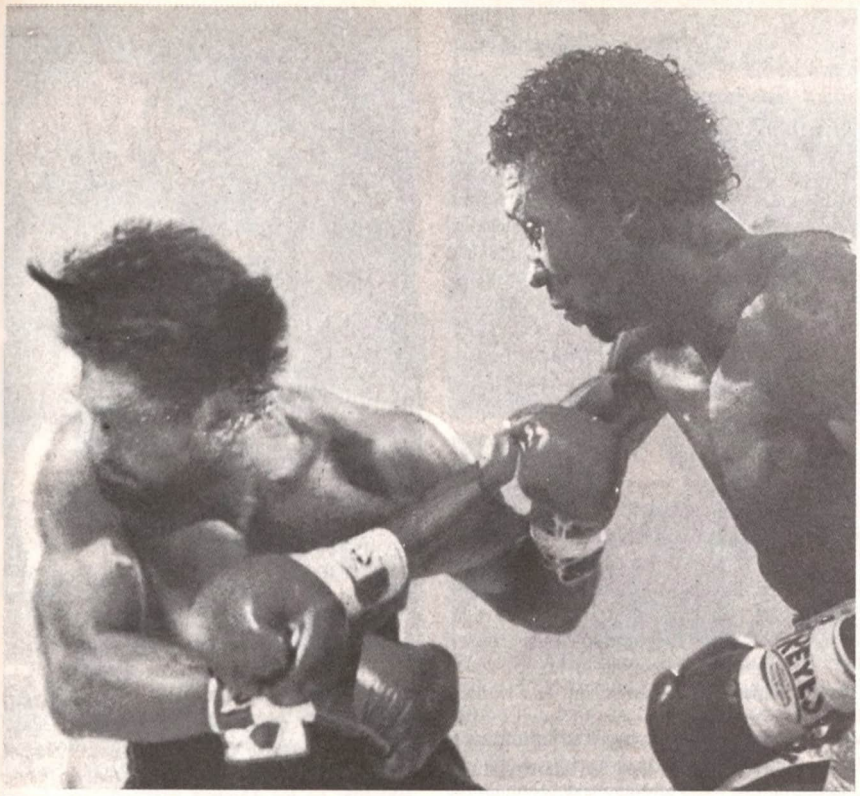
9 What weight will Hearns fight at?

The Hit Man will probably perform best at 156 or 157. Ever since he was a welterweight, he has been telling reporters that he wants to someday campaign as a light heavyweight. Everyone assumes that his tall frame (6'2") and broad shoulders would enable him to effectively carry 175 pounds, but actually he seemed very uncomfortable when he weighed a career high of 159¼ for a 1982 bout with Jeff McCracken. Hearns dropped McCracken twice in the second round, but by the sixth, he had become arm weary and was moving sluggishly. He pummelled the Californian in the eighth to force a stoppage, but was unable to floor him again. One of Hearns' biggest weapons against Hagler will be his exceptional hand speed. If he weighs in at 159 or 160, the extra bulk may nullify his quickness. There is no need for him to match Hagler's weight unless he is going to try to outmuscle the champion. And that would be suicide.

10 Is Hagler slipping?

We weren't sure after seeing him against Duran, but after his surprising struggle against Roldan, we are convinced that he is no longer the unbeatable monster who so brilliantly dominated Sibson in February 1983. That sixth-round kayo of the rugged Englishman was the most impressive performance of Hagler's career, but since then, the 30-year-old champion has hardly been Marvelous. And the Roldan fight just confirmed our belief that Marvin has inched past his peak. In the first three rounds of that bout, the usually confident Hagler seemed to be confused. He missed several punches, looked awkward and off-balance, and had trouble protecting his chin. Hagler's defense has always been very dependable, but for some reason, he had trouble slipping the Argentine's wide, telegraphed hooks. If Roldan's eye hadn't been closed by an uppercut in the third round, forcing him to fight half-blinded for seven more rounds, would Hagler's four-year reign have been in serious jeopardy? We'll never know. What we are sure of is that he won't be able to fight as sloppily against Hearns and still leave the ring with his belts.

Hearns overwhelms Jeff McCracken at middleweight



The Resurrection of the Hit Man: Hearns crushes Duran

11 Has Hearns really regained his power or did he just look awesome against an aging Duran?

Hearns has regained his *confidence*, therefore he has probably regained his power. Hearns' physician, Dr. Frederick Lewerenz, told *Sports Illustrated*, "Hearns' whole value judgment is based on how hard he can hit. This man actually lives and exists mentally from the power of his right hand. It's his self-image." Shortly after blowing out Duran, Hearns told a crowded press conference, "The Hit Man is back." He will enter the ring against Hagler extremely confident, knowing that he possesses two loaded and deadly fists. And that confidence will be boosted even further if he kayoes a tune-up opponent with relative ease. Don't forget that Hearns' punches are made even more damaging by the speed with which they are delivered. Thus his timing is vital. Hearns' failure to stop Murray Sutherland and Luigi Minchillo in his two fights prior to the Duran battle may have been a result of rustiness, not diminished power. If Marvin doesn't fall, it won't be because Hearns can't hit anymore, but because Hagler's chin can withstand even the hardest fists in boxing.

12 Will Hagler suffer any psychological effects of knowing that he was extended to the limit with Duran, while Hearns stopped the Panamanian in two rounds?

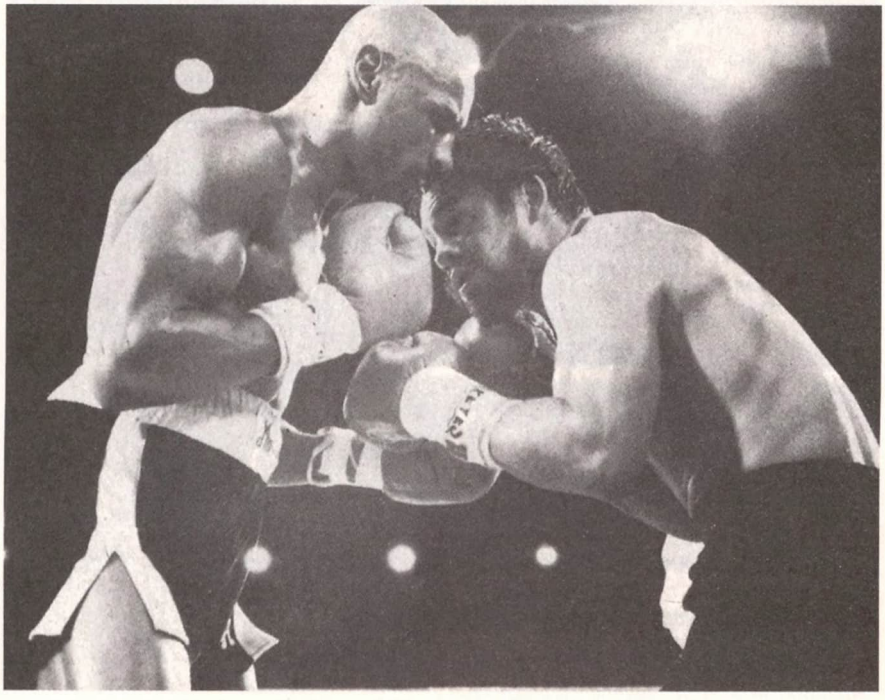
The Hit Man's quick stoppage of Duran didn't make Hagler run and hide under his basement steps, but it did inform him that Hearns had ended his curious two-year power shortage. During a TV interview, Hagler said he believed that the rigors of his fight with Duran left Cholo just "a shell" on the night he tangled with Hearns. Does Hagler really believe this or is he just trying to diminish the significance of Hearns' performance? If he does believe it, then he probably doesn't put much emphasis on the Hit Man's triumph. Sure, he will be wary of Hearns' power, but he isn't awake nights wondering why he was unable to stop Duran. If Hagler was truly overwhelmed watching the dramatic kayo of one of his toughest opponents, however, he may be doubting his *own* abilities just a bit. And don't forget, in a bout between two extremely sensitive men like Hagler and Hearns, proper *mental* preparation will be just as important as proper physical conditioning.

13 Which fighter has the better corner?

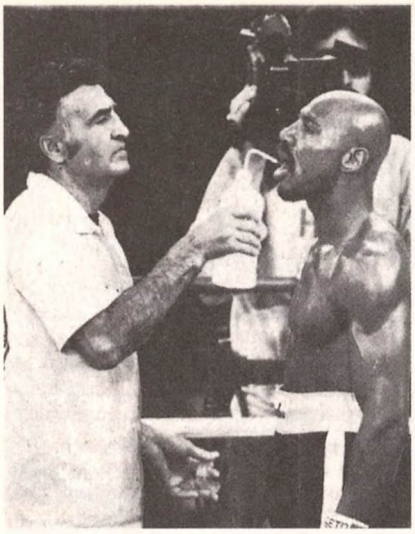
The answer to this often overlooked yet extremely important question is Hearns. Hagler's trainer, Goody Petronelli, does an excellent job of working with his titlist, particularly when he instructs him between rounds. Hagler listens intently to every word of advice Petronelli gives him and usually (except for portions of the Duran fight) follows the instructions perfectly. But Petronelli's experience in working with quality fighters is limited. Hagler is the only world-class fighter who Petronelli trains, and some experts wonder if he is capable of making adequate adjustments in his fighter's strategy if Hagler is falling far behind in a bout. Steward, however, is considered one of the best three or four mentors in the game. He has worked with three world champions (Hearns, Milton McCrory, and Hilmer Kenty), and currently trains several ranked contenders and rising prospects in Detroit's famed Kronk gym. Steward has helped mold Hearns into a complete fighter, and has devised excellent strategy for some of the Hit Man's previous fights. (Did anyone really expect Hearns to charge out and bomb Duran? Or think he could outbox the superslick Benitez?) If the Hagler-Hearns fight is close, the advice that Steward gives Hearns might make the difference.

14 What strategy does each man have to execute to win?

Hagler is going to have to make Hearns come



Hagler's image is damaged: a 15-round struggle with Duran



Can Petronelli quench Hagler's thirst for advice?

to him. Hagler's counterpunching skills are, well, marvelous. If Hagler lures Hearns toward him, he can chop his taller foe down with the same punishing combinations that halted an onrusher like Sibson. Hagler would love to fight on the inside and pulverize Hearns' midsection, but he can't charge recklessly ahead in an attempt to initiate war in the trenches. He will have to be patient. To win his third crown, Hearns has to utilize his advantages in height, reach, and speed. Like Hagler, his ideal strategy involves making his opponent come to him. But his enormous physical size gives him the advantage if the contest turns into a cautious, long-range boxing encounter like the Benitez chessmatch. Hearns has an eight-inch edge in reach, and he has to keep Hagler on the end of his jab and make the champion lunge with his punches. If he can back up Hagler with his jab and without getting hit in the process, Hearns will be in total command because Marvin is no marvel at fighting while retreating. But Hearns must be cautious. If he moves ahead, and then discovers that his punches earn him little respect, he will be an open target for Hagler's sharp fists. Hopefully, both fighters won't follow their plans to perfection or there could be some very long lines at the concession stands. After all, if both men circle each other and wait for the opportunity to counterpunch, the fans are going to have to buy quite a few cups of coffee to help keep awake.

15 If the fight goes 15 rounds, who will have the advantage?

In a lengthy bout, the edge would probably go to Hagler. Both men enter all of their fights in superb shape, but there may be no better conditioned fighter in boxing than Marvin Hagler. For nearly all his championship bouts, Hagler has locked himself in isolation at his Provincetown, Massachusetts, training camp and worked with the intensity of a Spartan warrior. His fabulous conditioning and ability to pace himself enabled him to finish strongly and dominate the final two rounds against Duran. The 25-year-old Hearns also trains extremely hard, in the stifling-hot confines of the Kronk gym, but he has shown signs of fatigue in previous bouts. In addition to the McCracken fight, he tired late against Sutherland, and as early as the fifth round against Minchillo. Fifteen rounds is along

Hearns fought off Sutherland and fatigue

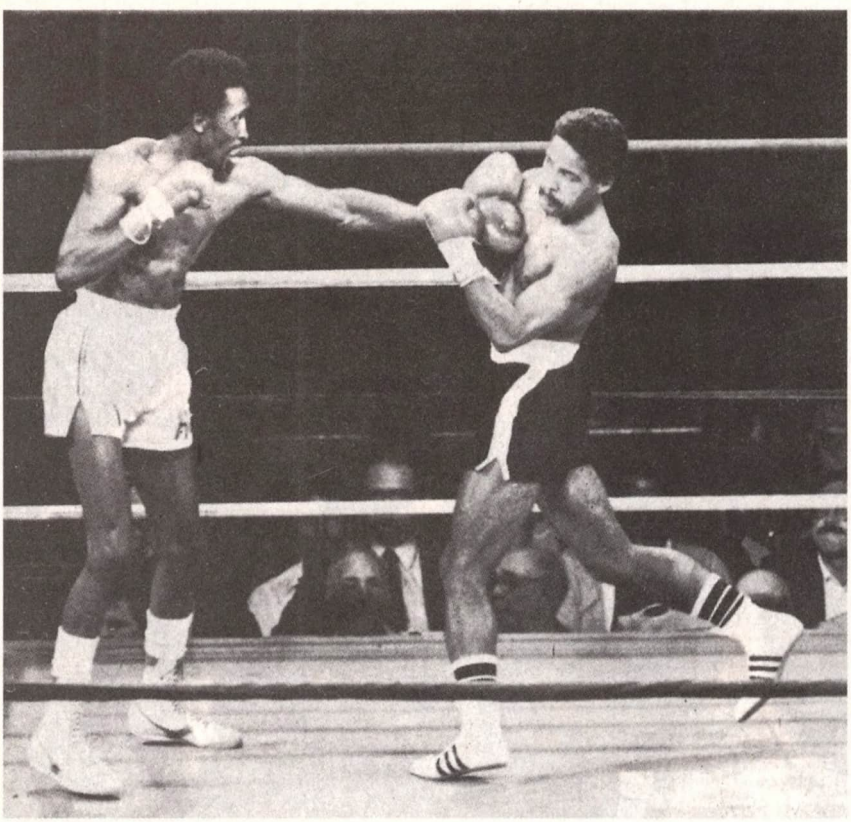
time to try and keep pace with a physical specimen like Hagler, unless Hearns is controlling the action and dictating the pace.

16 Will the Hit Man try to rub Hagler out quickly, or will he box patiently?

Months before the fight with Duran, Steward said that he felt Duran's legs could no longer carry him, and that he would be no match for Hearns. That belief might explain why Hearns started quickly against Duran, moving forward and trying for the quick kayo. That strategy is not a wise one to employ against Hagler, and both Hearns and Steward know that. Hagler is a masterful counterpuncher who has the unique ability to switch stances and punish an onrushing target with pinpoint combinations. Remember what he did to the pressuring Hamsho and Sibson? Expect to see the Motor City Cobra instead of the Hit Man in the early rounds. Hearns will box very cautiously while looking for an opening to land his missiles.

17 How will Hagler react to the punches of Detroit's feared powerhitter?

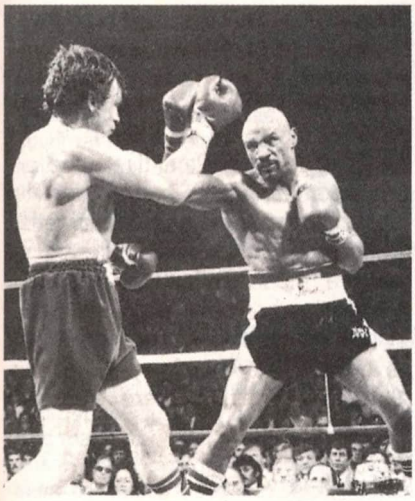
It is very hard to envision Hagler stretched out at Hearns' feet the way that Duran was. What is easy to picture, however, is Hagler sporting



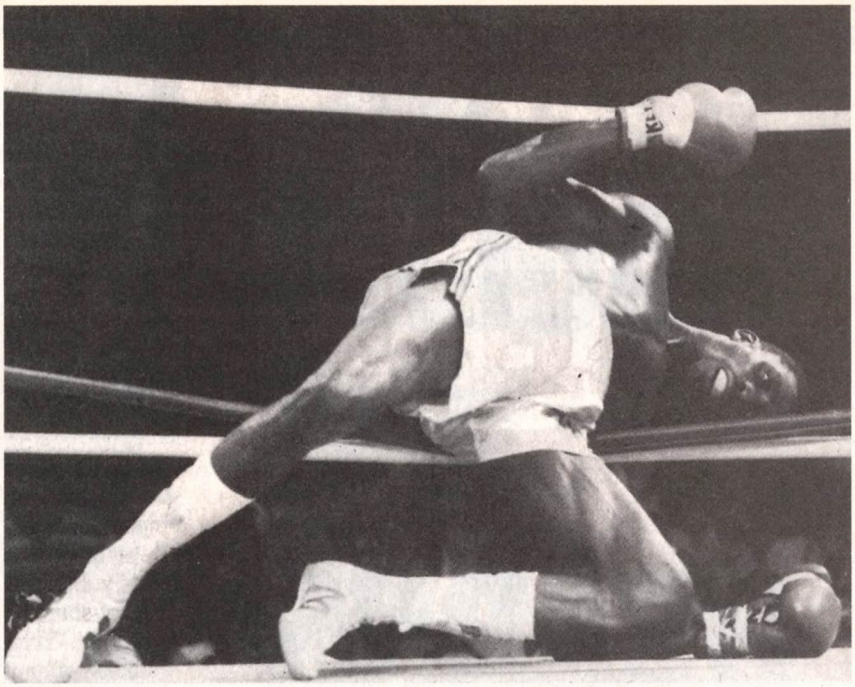
Hearns' jab kept Benitez off-balance

Hagler stands up to Vito

two swollen cheeks and an ugly, deep gash over his right eye. If Hearns registers a kayo, it might be because Hagler's face will have been turned into chopped meat. Hagler's right eyebrow is a mass of scar tissue that can easily be opened by Hearns' sharp, snapping left jab. Hagler has been cut in numerous fights, against Hamsho, Duran, Vito Antuofermo, and Bennie Briscoe. The eye is a prime target for Hearns, and one that he will undoubtedly shoot for. Especially if he can't rock Hagler when he hits him on the jaw.



Hagler hammers Sibson



Will Hearns crumble under Hagler's pressure and body attack?

18 What happens if Hearns is unable to hurt Hagler?

Fortunately for Hearns, he is one of the game's premier stylists. Take away Cooney's left hook, or Gerrie Coetzee's right cross, and they have no other weapons on which to rely. Nullify Hearns' powerful right and he can still outbox you and capture the decision. When Hearns discovered that his punches had little effect on Leonard, he didn't panic. Instead he put on a masterful boxing exhibition and led on the judges' cards before he was stopped in the 14th round. If Hearns' best shots only draw defiant grins from Hagler, the Hit Man will turn into the jab-and-dance man. And even if he must resort to that strategy, he is still capable of lifting the crown—he has already used that tactic to dethrone Benitez.

19 Can Hearns withstand Hagler's vicious body attack?

That is what everybody has been wondering since this matchup was first scheduled more than two years ago. Hearns completely unravelled when Leonard punished his midsection in the sixth and 13th rounds, but he weighed only 145 for that contest and looked like a skeleton in trunks. Today his ribs are covered with meat, and he is much stronger. Hearns can absorb body shots better than he could previously, but still, he knows that the key to survive the ribcracking shots of the middleweight masher is to simply not be hit in the first place. "I don't have a problem with a man using body tactics," Hearns says. "So if a man decides to go to my body, I'm just going to have to outsmart him, counter his moves. I'm going to have to not be there to get hit." Many observers forget that an equally important question may be: Can Hearns' *chin* withstand Hagler's punches? Leonard hurt Hearns to the body, but actually finished him with combinations to the head. Since that bout, Hearns has faced Ernie Singletary, Marcos Geraldo, McCracken, Benitez, Sutherland, Minchillo, and Duran. Of that group, only Duran hit hard enough to truly test Hearns' chin. And Cholo never really had the chance to launch a sustained attack. Hagler may not be a fearsome puncher, but he does have decent power, and he is a legitimate middleweight. If he can get inside that long reach early in the bout, and get off first, Hearns may have trouble surviving for 45 very long minutes.

Neither Hagler nor Hearns will be smiling when they meet in the ring

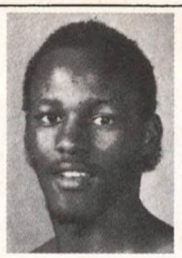
20 When will this fight materialize?

There have been rumors that this showdown will be staged as early as November, but before you start cancelling plans for that second honeymoon in the Bahamas, consider this: The fight needs plenty of time to become properly hyped; both men will probably fight at least once before they meet. Hagler is due to make a mandatory defense of the WBC portion of his crown against Hamsho. Although he'd probably like to bypass that commitment, he values his title too much to risk being stripped of it. And the Hearns camp certainly wouldn't mind taking a tune-up fight while waiting a few extra months to let Hagler get just a little bit older. If the promoters and the fighters want this bout to become a huge financial success, and if they will follow an intelligent path toward hyping it, this superfight probably won't occur before mid-1985. But it will certainly be worth the wait. □

HAGLER VS. HEARNS

20 Experts Tell Who Will Win And Why

With Superfight '85 drawing closer, 20 of the most distinguished experts in boxing have provided World Boxing with their exclusive analysis of the Marvin Hagler-Thomas Hearns middleweight clash



DONALD CURRY

WBA Welterweight Champion

"The way I see it, Hearns has his best chance of winning in the early rounds. He has to go out and try to stop Hagler between the first and the sixth. The longer the fight goes, the better Hagler's chances will become. There are so many different things involved in trying to pick a winner in this fight. There are many questions, and most of them are about Hearns. Can Hearns take Hagler's punch? Will he be able to outbox Hagler for the entire fight? How can Hearns hurt Hagler, a natural 160-pounder? That's the biggest question that I have. Hearns fought a couple of times at 160, and when he hit the bigger guys, he couldn't get them out. If Hearns can't hurt Hagler, it will probably be all over. Hearns would be forced to move and use the ring, and use his jab, but Hagler would put too much pressure on him. Hagler has never fought anyone with Hearns' height, but I think he'll be able to adjust. But I think that Hearns might have problems with Hagler's left-handed style because Thomas has never fought many southpaws. When I take everything into consideration, I have to go with Marvin."

JAMES KINCHEN

middleweight contender

"As far as Hagler vs. Hearns is concerned, I give the small edge to Hearns by decision. There won't be any kayos, because both fighters are great champions. I like Hearns because Hagler has been getting hit more and more in every fight. Hearns will put a lot of pressure on Hagler and he will box him. The only other guy who put pressure on Hagler was Antuofermo, and he was very successful. Everyone usually comes straight on in against Hagler, but Hearns will be moving as he pressures Hagler. Hearns won't stand still in front of Hagler or get cocky and try for a knockout, because he knows that he'll get hurt. I think Hagler-Hearns is a fight that will wake up the boxing world. Hearns is known as one of the best boxer-punchers, and Hagler is considered to be The Invincible. Hagler wants to come right after Hearns to show the people that he isn't washed up, and Hearns wants to prove that he really is the better fighter. People will see a great fight."

PAT PUTNAM

Sports Illustrated senior writer

"This is obviously a very interesting fight. Hagler has totally dominated the middleweight division, and he's a helluva fighter, but I've always felt that two styles could beat him. One is the way that Sugar Ray Robinson would have fought him: with a lot of movement, staying on the outside and popping him. The other is a Jake LaMotta style: moving inside, but moving your head as you come in. Just coming in straight against Marvin gets you killed. Hearns will fight him the way Robinson would have fought him. I've always felt that Hearns and Leonard are the only two fighters of this era who had a chance to beat Hagler. Hearns is a tremendous boxer. He has a great jab and good movement, and he's dangerous because he can always drop in that right hand. Marvin is a textbook fighter. He starts a four-punch combination and then throws all four punches, no matter what the other guy does. He's not as versatile as Hearns. There is some question about Marvin's age. He can go on the way he has been for another three or four years, or it can end overnight. Hagler is one of the all-time great middleweights and if he beats Hearns, he will move even higher. You're going to see an awful lot of strategy on both sides. There will be two very tough, confident people in the ring and whatever happens, you're going to have a classic."

ANGELO DUNDEE

veteran manager-trainer

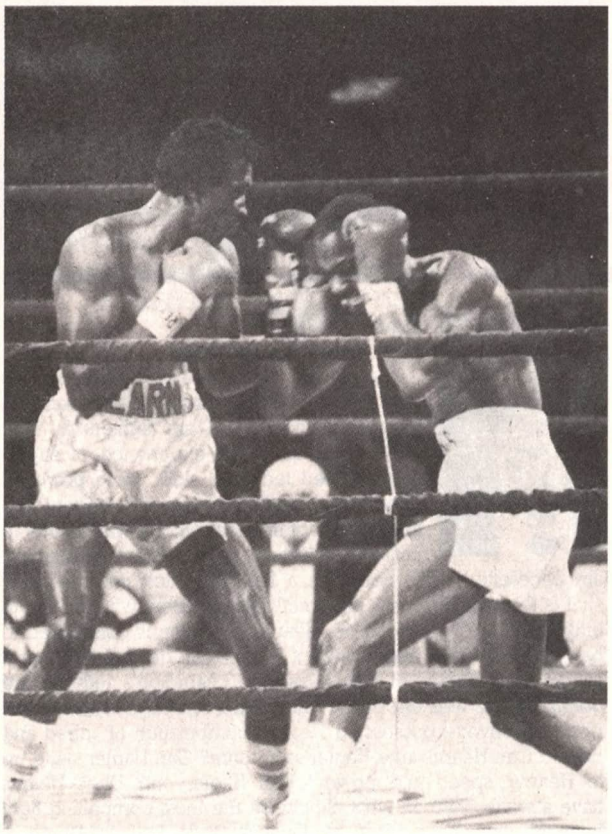
"You know that the guy with the 'H' in his name is gonna win. No, seriously, this is the kind of fight that I would like to see. Either man is capable of winning and that is what makes a great matchup. I like Hagler for the simple reason that Hearns is going into a higher weight division. He's entering the middleweight domain now. Early on, Hearns will look like a winner, but he has a habit of deviating from his left jab at some point in his fights, and when he forgets it, he becomes fair game. Hearns was a strong welterweight and junior middleweight, but a lot of guys aren't big bangers anymore when they reach that higher plateau. A perfect example is Alexis Arguello. Also, I don't know how good Hearns will be at handling a top-notch southpaw if he isn't used to them. I remember the difficult time that Ray Leonard had with Ayub Kalule when they fought. Hearns' mobility is not that great and his balance has never been the best. Hagler has to have the edge. But what makes boxing exciting is that you never know. And after being around Muhammad Ali and Ray, I've stopped being amazed."

KEN PICKING

USA Today boxing writer

"Hagler and Hearns are two gifted athletes who learned what weaknesses they had and eliminated them. Both are fighters in their prime who have the experience of superfights, varied technical skills, kayo power in either hand, and immense wills to win. The first conflict of the fight will be who is able to initiate the action; both fighters traditionally are pacesetters. This could be a fight in which not one body shot is thrown; both men are strictly headhunters who are out to end it all as early as possible. Hearns, however, is considered to be vulnerable to a body attack if Hagler can get inside Hearns' stinging jab. Critics of Hagler say the champion's reflexes are going and his legs are gone. And Hagler has never been in the ring with anyone possessing Hearns' combination of speed and power. Can Hearns take Hagler's pressure? Can Hagler stand up to Hearns' speed and power? Will Hagler cut? Does Hearns have a weak chin? In what should be the most compelling fight between two future Hall of Famers since Leonard-Duran I, Hearns will win with speed and stop Hagler on cuts in the 13th round."

Hagler pastes Roberto Duran



Hearns hammers Fred Hutchings

HAROLD WESTON JR.

Madison Square Garden matchmaker

"In the first four rounds I like Hearns, but if the fight goes longer than four rounds, I'm picking Hagler. This is a pretty good match-up because Hearns knocked out Duran and Hagler didn't. Tommy is going to go right out and try to blast Hagler out of the ring. If his punch lands on Hagler, and nothing happens, Tommy's in a lot of trouble. I don't know if Hearns can hurt Hagler. Hearns didn't kayo Wilfred Benitez or Luigi Minchillo, so there's some question about his power at the higher weights. But his punch does have some kick if he was able to stop Duran. Hagler will try to stay in close and work the body, wear Hearns down the same way that he wears down everybody else. I don't think that Hearns' size will trouble Hagler. Tall guys have as much trouble with short guys as short guys do with tall ones. It's not that easy for a big man to hit a shorter man."

DR. FERDIE PACHECO

NBC boxing adviser and commentator

"Marvin Hagler carries the bulk of a legitimate middleweight, he has incredible confidence in himself, and all of his skills are at their peak. That is all too much for Hearns to overcome. Hearns has shown too much respect for good boxers who punch back hard. In the sixth round against Leonard, Hearns *The Hunter* became Hearns *The Hunted.* Hagler takes a tremendous shot. Hearns can't knock him out, but Hagler can knock out Hearns. I think Hagler will win by an outright kayo or the fight will have to be stopped by the referee. In the final analysis, these are two great champions who are almost perfectly matched. But on the basis of size, confidence, overall ability, and record, the edge has to go to Hagler."

EDDIE FUTCH

trainer of Larry Holmes and Michael Spinks

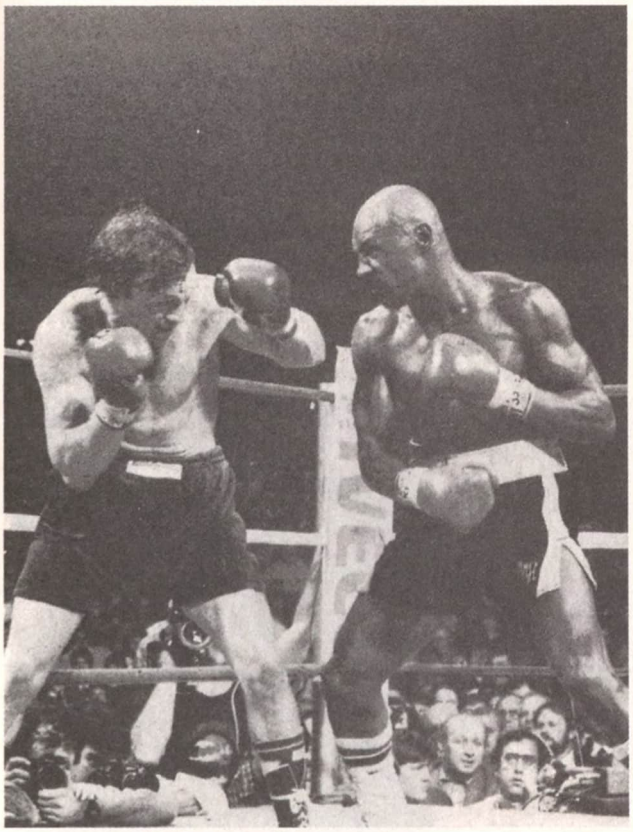
"I like Hearns in the fight because of his boxing ability. He has a great left jab and good punching power. I managed Willie Monroe, one of the two fighters to beat Hagler in his career, and Willie's style was similar to Hearns. He had a good jab, punching power in his right, and he was tall and rangy. Our strategy with Monroe was to keep Hagler countering instead of leading off. This is the same thing that Hearns will do. Hagler is great when you let him come to you and dictate the terms of the fight. But when he is forced to back up or counterpunch, he is not as effective. I'm sure Hearns' people will look back at the Monroe fight and study the style that Willie used to beat him. A kayo is possible in this one, but I think that Hearns will probably win by decision."

ED SCHUYLER

Associated Press boxing writer

"I like Hearns. I think that he has matured physically and mentally. It took a long time to get over the Leonard loss, but he finally did get over it. And he learned that he doesn't have to knock out everyone, because he has a helluva jab and a great reach. The Duran fight was a big win for him. Even if Duran was through, if he was spent from his fight with Hagler, the kayo of Duran was a great confidence booster for Hearns. Hearns is on his way up right now. Hagler isn't necessarily on his way down, but he might be. Hagler is a very well-conditioned athlete, and Hearns' stamina has been a question mark, but Hearns' upper body has increased and I believe that his stamina has increased also. If Hearns doesn't get

The Hit Man fires at Duran



Hagler overwhelms Tony Sibson

him early, he'll box for the rest of the fight. I don't know exactly how it will end up, but if it goes the distance, Hearns will win a close decision, and if it ends in a kayo, Hearns is the one who will score it."

LARRY MERCHANT

HBO analyst

"Picking a winner in this fight depends on which one of two views you take. The first view is that Thomas Hearns has never proven that he can carry his great punching ability all the way from welterweight to the highest plain of the middleweight division. And he has never proven that he can absorb the punch of a good-punching middleweight. It's still fairly fresh in many people's minds that Sugar Ray Leonard hurt him with both body and head punches. The second view is that Marvin Hagler is not the fighter he once was. I think that those who have rushed to the judgment that Hearns will defeat Hagler, hold this view. Which view prevails, I can't say. It's a little premature. As is often the case in a fight like this, it comes down to temperament, ambition, and need. These are two outstanding athletes who have a need to be recognized as great champions. Hearns has recovered his ambition and drive after several years of floundering since the loss to Leonard. And Hagler showed in the Mustafa Hamsho fight that he still has the anger and need to prove himself. Since Hagler has fought and beaten every good middleweight for about a decade, until anyone proves otherwise, this is a case of an outstanding middleweight champion fighting an outstanding smaller man. I wouldn't be surprised by anything that happens in this fight, but it's fair to say that at this time, I lean toward Hagler."

JAMES SHULER

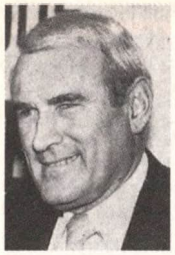
middleweight contender

"Hearns will use his height and reach well and it will bother Hagler for a while. Hearns will come out boxing, he'll be going after Marvin for seven or eight rounds, but then he'll see that he can't get him and Hagler will take over. Because he will be at a size disadvantage, Hagler will have to come in well prepared and he'll have to gamble, he'll have to reach for openings and throw some punches that he normally doesn't throw. He will basically concentrate on hurting Hearns to the body. He'll be thinking of what Ray Leonard did to him. I don't think Hearns' body will be able to take the punches. He won't be at junior middleweight, beating on the little guys. Now he's moving up to a man's division. This is serious here at 160 pounds. I see the fight going into the late rounds, and the outcome will be Hagler by kayo. The end will come when he lands a barrage of punches and the referee comes in and stops it."

BENNIE GEORGINO

veteran manager-trainer

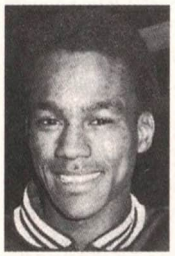
"I like Hearns because of the way he has fought in his last couple of bouts. He has found himself again and I feel that he is the best middleweight in the world today. Forget the Sugar Ray Leonard fight, Hearns was too light and weak for that bout. Hearns will be fighting at the weight he should fight at, and he'll be stronger and more powerful than before. Hagler has already fought his good fights and he's reached his peak. This is a case of one fighter on the way up meeting one who is on the way down. I look for a dull fight, one that will go the limit. Hearns' jab is so good that it will keep him out of trouble, and Hagler is too smart to get stopped. You won't see Hagler come charging out, because he's a great fighter who's had a great career, and he doesn't want to get knocked out."



GIL CLANCY

CBS analyst and former manager-trainer

"Hearns is going to give Hagler a lot of trouble because he will be able to hit Marvin. The couple of guys who did hit Marvin in his career, like Duran and Antuofermo, in their first fight, were fairly successful. Hagler just isn't as good when he has to back up. Hagler is excellent at switching from the southpaw to the orthodox stances, so he'll give Hearns some trouble. He'll try to bull Tommy around the ring and work the body. But, when a guy is Marvin's age, you never know when he's ready to be taken. If I have to predict a winner, it would be Hearns, probably by decision."



FRED HUTCHINGS

junior middleweight contender

"It's hard to see when you're watching the tube, but Thomas Hearns is a professional thumber. It's unbelievable the way he's got it down. Sugar Ray Leonard and Harold Weston Jr. got detached retinas after they fought him. And he thumbed me at least twice. If they fight with thumbs on the gloves, Hearns knocks out Hagler; if they fight with thumbless gloves, Hagler retires Hearns. This is a big fight because it's a fight that the public demands. There are only two guys left out there to match up and that's Hagler and Hearns. Hearns has dominated the junior middleweights, I can't take any credit away from him, and whether he thumbs you or bites you, he's put away the best. He has reach and speed, but that is not enough to beat a champion like Hagler. Hearns doesn't have the power to hurt Hagler. And his speed isn't like the speed of Muhammad Ali or Sugar Ray Leonard. Hagler will destroy him because he's a complete fighter, a manager's and trainer's dream."

NICK CHARLES

Cable News Network sportscaster

"With the heavyweight division is such bad shape, and stars like Ray Mancini and Aaron Pryor absent recently, the fight game needs a spectacle like this. The media has always had problems building Hagler into a larger-than-life figure because he looks ominous, but he's actually a really nice guy. And Hearns has never had a large degree of charisma. His hype has always been that he could destroy a guy with one punch. This should be hyped well. It's not going to be the Fight of the Century that appeals to everyone, but at least the boxing public will be dying to see it. I think Hearns will win by decision if he listens to his corner and fights from the outside. He moves well enough that he can hit and run all night, and he has the kind of strong jab that Marvin will have trouble countering. Hearns can't stand in front of Hagler because Marvin's punches might not knock him out, but they will discourage him. If Hearns builds up a big early lead, he might win easily because he could be facing a slowed-down Hagler by the ninth round. Hagler appears ready to be taken and some people believe that he is actually two years older than advertised. I don't see this as a collision fight, primarily because Hearns will move, but it shouldn't be a dull fight."

MICHAEL KATZ

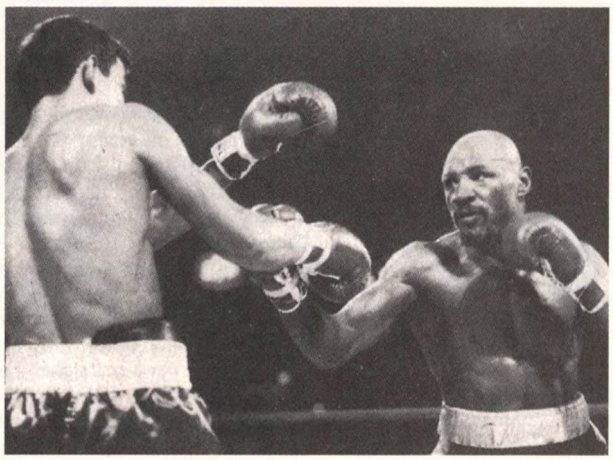
New York Times boxing writer

"These are two really fine fighters who match up wonderfully. There are a lot of factors involved. Hagler probably can't lose to any middleweight around, but welterweights with fast hands, like Duran, can give him trouble. I like the way that Hearns can fight from the outside. I think Vito Antuofermo ruined a whole generation of middleweights who watched him and then thought that they should rush Hagler, because Hagler is one of the finest infighters in boxing. He beat the hell out of Duran with inside uppercuts and he'd do the same to Hearns on the inside. Hearns will have to keep Hagler away. One thing no one knows is if Hearns will have trouble with a southpaw. He never fought a real southpaw. I'm told that the reason is because he has trouble with them. Can Hearns hurt Hagler? That's the key to the fight. So far nobody's been able to hurt this man. Unlike Gerry Cooney, Hagler seems to have padded temples. It's like he's wearing a football helmet under his scalp. I can't pick a winner, that's why this is a wonderful fight."

ART RUST JR.

WABC-New York Radio Sports Personality

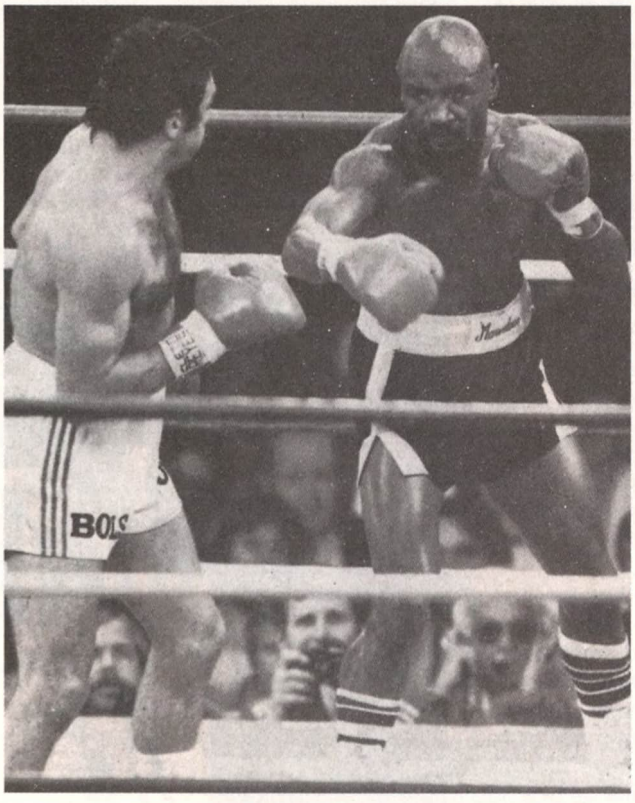
"The only thing that bothers me about this damn thing is the question mark, the enigma concerning Hearns' ability to take it downstairs in the midriff. You don't learn how to take body shots and I wonder if he really can stand up to them. I picked him to beat Sugar Ray Leonard and he was winning for five rounds, but when Leonard layed that left to the body in the sixth, I saw Hearns' legs turn to spaghetti. And Benitez hit him with a body shot in the ninth canto of their fight and he wobbled. If he can take the body shots, he'll kick



Marvin was marvelous against Mustafa Hamsho

Hearns outclasses Murray Sutherland

Hearns belts Luigi Minchillo



Hagler chops down Juan Roldan

the crap out of Hagler. Hagler will test his body, this won't be a Duran rumble with bing, bing, bing, and Hearns knocks the cat out right away. But with Tommy's speed, quickness, and power, eventually he will stop Hagler. I say 'stop him' generically. Maybe I don't see Marvin stretched out, but this guy *can* do that to him."

TYRONE CRAWLEY

lightweight contender

"I think that this is one of the best fights in any division in boxing today. Thomas Hearns has developed into a full-fledged middleweight and he will give Marvin Hagler a lot of trouble. He has a good jab and good movement, and he's a great boxer. I hope that Hearns isn't stupid enough to stand and slug because Hagler is one of the most physical fighters out there. If Hearns thinks that he has the power to slug with Hagler, he'll be jeopardizing everything. He'll be in trouble if he thinks he can rush Hagler the same way that he rushed Duran. I look for Hearns' height and reach to trouble Hagler at the beginning of the fight, and by the time Hagler figures him out, Hearns will have built up a big lead and Hagler will have to knock him out to win. If the fight ended in a kayo, Hagler would win. But I expect that Hearns will win by decision. I look for an upset because the time is right for Hearns to capitalize on everything."

JERRY GIRARD

Independent Network News sportscaster

"I think Hearns is going to beat him by decision. Hagler has not regressed, but he's at his peak, he's not going to get any better. Hearns is still growing, he's maturing in the ring and getting stronger physically. His hand speed will enable him to outbox Hagler, although he won't be able to put him away. Since the Leonard fight, Hearns has shown that he has the stamina to last 12 or 15 rounds, and the kayo of Duran had to give him great confidence. Don't forget, Duran went the distance with Hagler and wasn't even marked at the end of the fight. To sum it up, I think that Hearns' reach, speed, and height will enable him to outpoint Hagler, but I wouldn't bet a bundle on it."

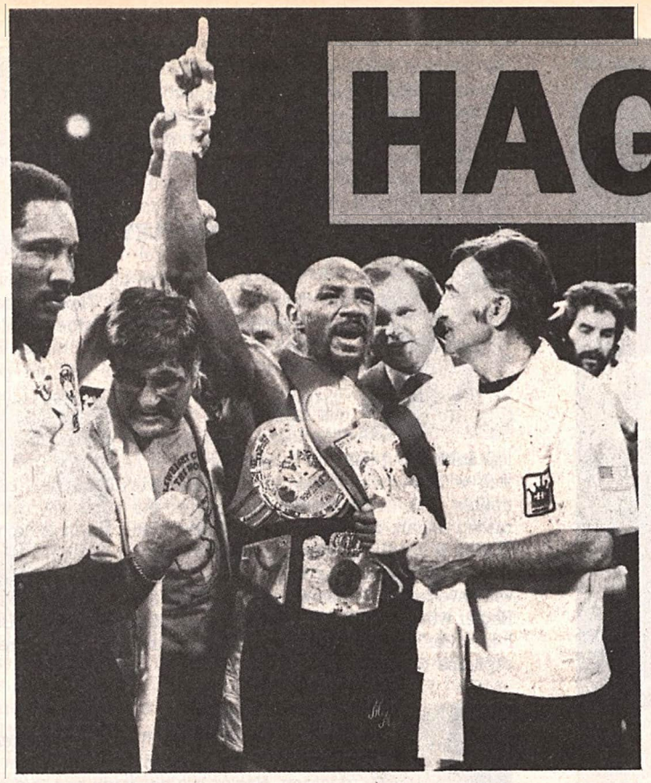
VITO ANTUOFERMO

former middleweight champion

"This fight's definitely going to bring a lot of boxing people out because we haven't really had a big match like this in a long time. It's like Ali-Joe Frazier or Ali-Ken Norton. It's a hard fight to pick, but I'd have to choose Hagler. Hearns could possibly do the same job on Hagler that he did on Duran, but Hagler doesn't stay stationary like Duran. You can't just bob and weave and stand there against Hearns, you have to move the way that Leonard did against him. Hagler will move in the beginning and not give Hearns a target, then after three or four rounds, he'll go after him. After the seventh or eight round, I feel he'll knock Hearns down for the count. Hagler is a good boxer, he's not boring like some people say. You have to appreciate his style. I never did when I fought him, but now I do as a fan. To me, he's like a big Leonard. His punches don't land physically hard, I've been hit harder by Bennie Briscoe, Cyclone Hart, and Eckhard Dagge, but they hurt because they come from different directions. If you're not used to fighting a *good* southpaw, then you don't see his punches coming. Hearns has trouble with middleweights, and I don't think that he's gonna be able to budge Hagler."

Final tally: Hearns 10, Hagler 7, Undecided 3

HAGLER-HEARNS



EIGHT MINUTES THAT ELECTRIFIED THE WORLD

"The Fight" conclusively ended all speculation about the identity of the world's best middleweight and boxing's biggest superstar. Through a mask of blood, Marvin Hagler pounded Thomas Hearns into defeat in a classic war. One in which The Hit Man was quite spectacular himself, but just not Marvelous

By Jeff Ryan

Battle is the most magnificent competition in which a human being can indulge. It brings out all that is best; it removes all that is base.

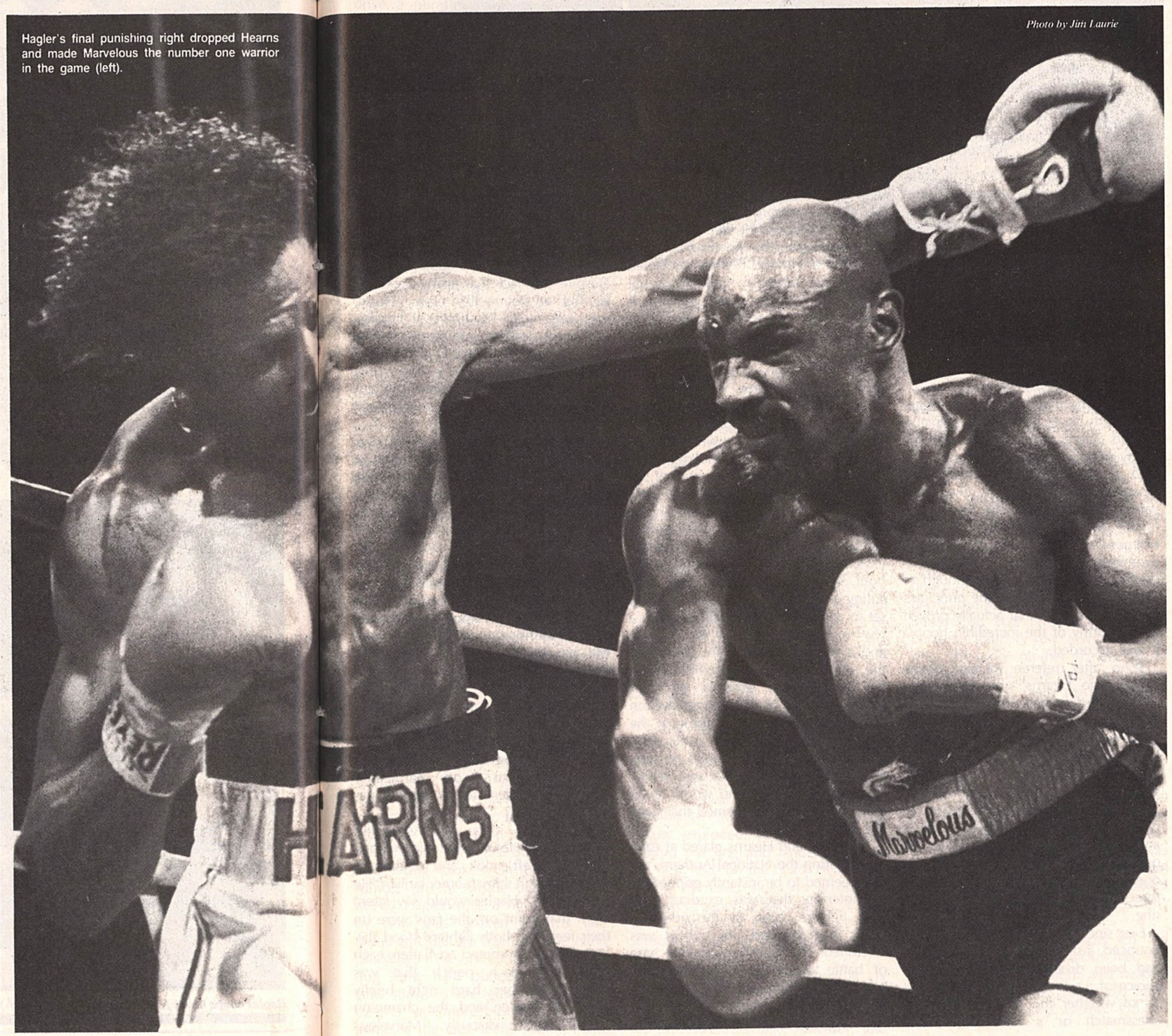
—George S. Patton

ABOUT AN HOUR after the war had ended, the battlefield was silent. A couple of filthy hand towels from the fighters' corners laid crumpled in the center of the ring. A piece of gauze marked the spot where both men had stood for their prefight instructions. On the powder blue canvas, between the big white "C" and the big white "A" that helped spell out the words "Caesars Palace" was a sprinkling of red spots.

The dried blood of a warrior. Not a fallen warrior, but one who had just battled gallantly and had emerged as a hero in the same arena where he greatly tarnished his image in his last appearance. The canopy, which had been suspended high over the ring during the fight, was now sagging just a few feet above the ring. To anyone who had been staring at the hellbent

Hagler's final punishing right dropped Hearns and made Marvelous the number one warrior in the game (left).

Photo by Jim Laurie



THE BIBLE OF BOXING

fury that filled that ring earlier, the canopy unmistakably resembled a curtain that had been lowered to the stage following an incredibly dramatic performance.

The promoters billed this one as simply "The Fight" because they knew that Marvelous Marvin Hagler and Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns didn't need a fancy nickname for their meeting in Las Vegas. The Fight, plain and simple. And that's what it was. For eight minutes and one second, Hagler and Hearns reduced their much-heralded *boxing match* to a *fight,* the sweet science in its most basic form. They stripped away the trimmings and just rumbled. This was the kind of battle that boxing's critics hate, yet one that even Howard Cosell wouldn't have walked away from if he had been sitting at ringside. Hagler and Hearns played upon man's fascination with violence, that same human instinct that makes people stop and stare at the aftermaths of an auto accident. When the opening bell sounded, a brutal head-on collision ensued, and none of the 15,088 fans in attendance turned his head and looked away.

How fitting that Top Rank promoter Bob Arum chose to stage this epic at Caesars Palace. Caesars features all the gaudy trappings of ancient Rome and, with its unique motif, creates the atmosphere of a giant orgy. Overindulgence is the theme at The Palace, and for the first time in three years (since Holmes-Cooney), boxing fans got to overindulge themselves in a true superfight. One that was big enough to warrant a 25-city tour by the principles involved, and one that actually proved to be worthy of the incredible hoopla it was accorded.

Soon after referee Richard Steele looked into Hearns' unfocusing eyes and decided to halt The Fight at 2:01 of round three, ringsiders were rating the bout alongside the Tony Zale-Rocky Graziano and Sugar Ray Robinson-Jake LaMotta battles as one of the greatest wars in middleweight history. Some were declaring Hagler-Hearns to be the most exciting fight of all time, and even those who didn't share that opinion, did, however, believe that the opening round was the most furious three minutes ever fought in a boxing ring.

Ever since the confrontation was announced last December, the experts had been divided not only in their choice of a winner, but in their analysis of whether the bout would be a chessmatch or a holocaust. Some viewed the contest as a potential yawner, with Hearns dancing and jabbing, and Hagler, the supreme scientist, waiting patiently for his challenger to make a mistake. Others predicted that the two macho men would charge out of their corners and, with their pride stung by weeks of the other man's prefight taunts, battle as relentlessly as the Roman gladiators whose statues stood on The Palace's front lawn. That's certainly what the fans hoped for, but wild slugfests, even between two guys who profess to truly hate each other, are rare when fighters as skillful as Hagler and Hearns meet.

Hearns controlled the early stages of the first round, trying to keep the pressing Hagler at long range. But the champion was on a mission to execute his motto of "destruct and destroy."

If there was perhaps an omen of the ferocity that would be unleashed within the four corners of the tiny ring, it was the bizarre change in the weather as fight time approached. In preceding days, and even on the morning of the bout, the skies over Las Vegas was sunny and calm. But as late afternoon set in and the opening bell was only a few hours away, the sky turned gray and a swirling wind began disturbing the tranquility. Then, shortly before the two majestic athletes left their dressing rooms in the Sports Pavillion and made the long trek through the crowd toward the combat zone, darkness fell, and not a star could be seen in the overcast sky. Hagler and Hearns were the only stars who would shine on this night, and it seemed that even the heavens knew it.

As Hagler and Hearns glared at each other during the National Anthem, the fans seemed to be instantly gripped by the intensity that was exuding from both fighters' eyes. By the time the music had stopped, the crowd was electrified. The question of what type of battle would be waged was answered almost immediately, when after just 15 seconds, Hagler decided that he was going to walk through a hail of cannon fire if necessary in order to get to Hearns' chin and midsection.

Hagler's trainer, Goody Petronelli, had promised that his champion wouldn't box with the superior boxer. Despite the fact that many reporters scoffed at Petronelli's claim, Hagler was keeping to his trainer's promise. Of course, walking into Hearns meant trying to get past the Hit Man's awesome right hand. Many have tried such an apparently suicidal strategy, but only one (Sugar Ray Leonard) had ever succeeded.

At a poolside cocktail party at Caesars the night before the bout, films of several Hagler and Hearns bouts were shown on a large screen while partiers mingled, paying only casual attention to the picture in front of them. There was one clip, however, that not only had the audience transfixed, but also elicited a collective "Ooooh." It was the final sequence from last June's Hearns-Roberto Duran bout, when Hearns' thunderous right crashed onto the chin of Duran and the Panamanian fell to the floor as though the life had been drained right out of him. The punch was downright frightening. Now, 10 months after that bout, and one night after it was replayed into the minds of the sport's experts, here was Hagler willing to absorb that fearful bomb in order to complete his mission.

And absorb it he did. As Hagler marched in, Hearns met him with a screaming left hook and a flashing right that hurt him momentarily. ("He can punch," Hagler would say later.) From that point on, the fans were on their feet, and both fighters stood flat-footed and attempted to flatten each other with each punch that was thrown. Another hard right briefly staggered Hagler, and the champion fought back viciously. Marvelous

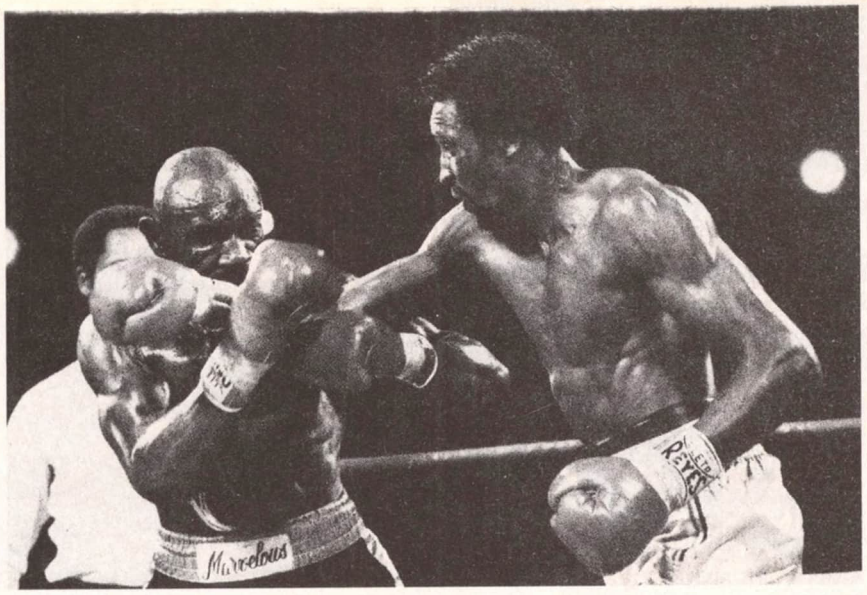
switched from the southpaw to orthodox stances so quickly that Hearns didn't have time to adjust. First a right hook would snap the Motor City Cobra's head to the side, then a left hook would. When Hagler seemed to be gaining an advantage, Hearns would drive a punishing uppercut through the middle of Hagler's guard, and Marvelous would be forced to momentarily stop his surge and regroup.

At the morning weigh-in, Hagler had worn a crimson red cap with the word "War" printed on it. "Blood color," he explained. "That's what I'm dressed in. That's what I feel."

He was dressed in more red when either a Hearns right or an elbow opened a gash on his forehead midway through the round. Blood poured in a straight line down Hagler's nose and Hearns smelled an opportunity to take advantage. He blasted away with both hands and the blood sprayed off Hagler's face like a shower of red sweat. Undaunted, Hagler continued his march forward. Nobody knew for certain which fighter would be stronger, but it was apparent that Hagler, at a natural 159¼ pounds, had a great edge over Hearns, who was a bulked-up 159¾. Whenever Hagler charged in, Hearns was unable to hold him off for more than a second, and Marvelous would repeatedly snap the Hit Man's head.

Near the end of a round that seemed nearly five minutes long because of its nonstop action, Hagler connected with a right and Hearns wobbled toward a corner. At the bell, the normally apathetic collection of tourists and high rollers that constitutes a Caesars fight crowd, roared uncontrollably. In three unforgettable minutes, they had all become avid fight fans.

As the second round started, the blood immediately began flowing down Hagler's face again. By now, Marvin was seeing red, literally and figuratively. "When I see blood, I turn into a bull," he remarked later. Unaccustomed to playing the role of the matador, Hearns tried to dance away from Hagler's charges. But a series of bonejarring hooks soon forced him to rumble on the inside again. Hearns rattled Hagler with a right hand that by now was broken (Hearns later found out that he fractured the hand, probably in the first round), but Hagler dug some hard punches to the ribs (and some to the groin), and rattled Hearns with more blistering combinations. By the end of the round, it was apparent that Hearns couldn't take many more clean, head-snapping shots without falling.



The Hit Man flattened welterweights and junior middleweights when he fired his right-handed gun, but Hagler, although stunned, remained upright and strong.

"He's ready to go," Hagler told his corner between rounds. "He's not going to hurt me with that right hand. I took his best, and now I'm going to knock him out."

Hearns wisely started the third round on his toes, and began boxing effectively. He skitted from side-to side, all the while pumping out a sharp left jab and never allowing Hagler the time to set himself. After Hagler, 61-2-2 (51), missed some wild swings, a few crisp jabs reopened the ugly cut on his forehead, and blood now seeped from a gash on his right cheek as well. Steele called time-out and led Hagler to the corner to be examined by Dr. Donald Romeo, the chief physician of the Nevada State Athletic Commission, and the boos cascaded upon the ring. When Hagler assured Romeo that the blood wasn't blinding him, the action was allowed to resume and the roaring began again. Sensing that the bout (which he was leading on two cards and in the minds of nearly all ringsiders) could possibly be stopped in Hearns' favor, Hagler exploded. He chased Hearns around the ring and landed a booming right high on the head. Hearns, 40-2 (34), stumbled sideways across the ring with Hagler in fast pursuit. A right to the jaw rattled Hearns and another screaming right to the cheek knocked him on his back.

"He's not gettin' up," came a cry from nearby in the crowd, but Hearns did struggle to his feet. One look at his expressionless face, however, told Steele all that he needed to know.

As if the incredible war that Hagler and Hearns waged wasn't enough, two more dramas would be played out in the moments that followed the conclusion of the battle. To those who saw them, they will forever stand out as two indelible images of what boxing is all about—triumph and tragedy. After the fighters' handlers had flocked into the ring, Hagler rode high above the crowd on the shoulders of his supporters. At the same time, a weak and beaten Hearns was being carried, like a small child, back to his corner by a friend, Quentin Hines.

A minute later, the suffering that only a mother can feel for her son was played out for whoever's eyes dared to intrude on Lois Hearns' moment of personal grief. A few rows from the ring, the only mother in the world who is proud to have raised a Hit Man stood hunched over, tears streaming from beneath her glasses. Unable to walk toward the ring, she needed the assistance of three men just to be helped into a seat. The ring and her son seemed so close, but she could reach neither. Meanwhile, oblivious to everything but the cheering of his fans, Hagler stood with his finger thrust in the air, indicating that he was now undeniably number one. The agony and the ecstasy, as plainly different as a sunny, desert day and a gloomy, cold night.

When Hagler and Hearns left the ring, most of the fans quickly filed out of the makeshift stadium and headed for the slot machines about 200 yards away in the Palace's casino. On his

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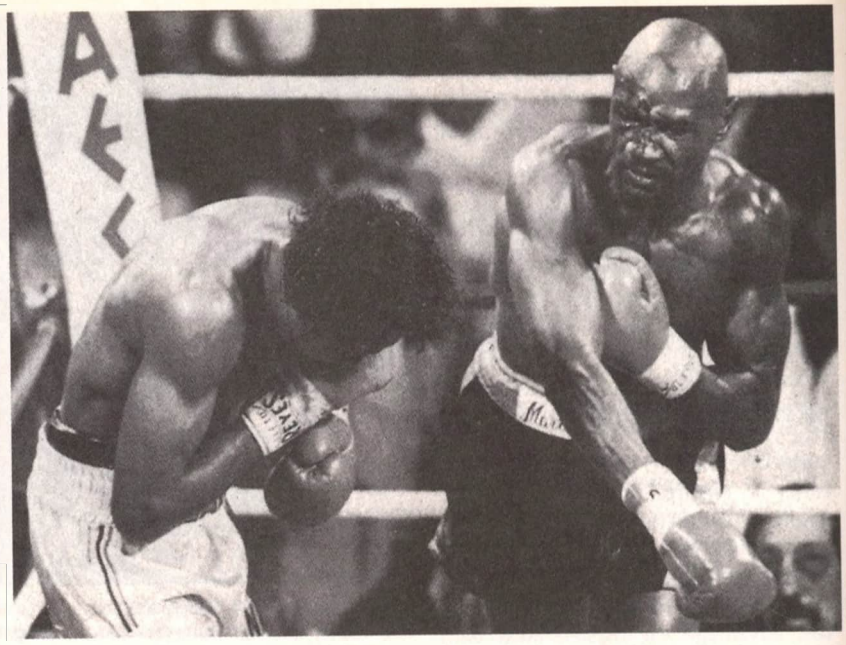


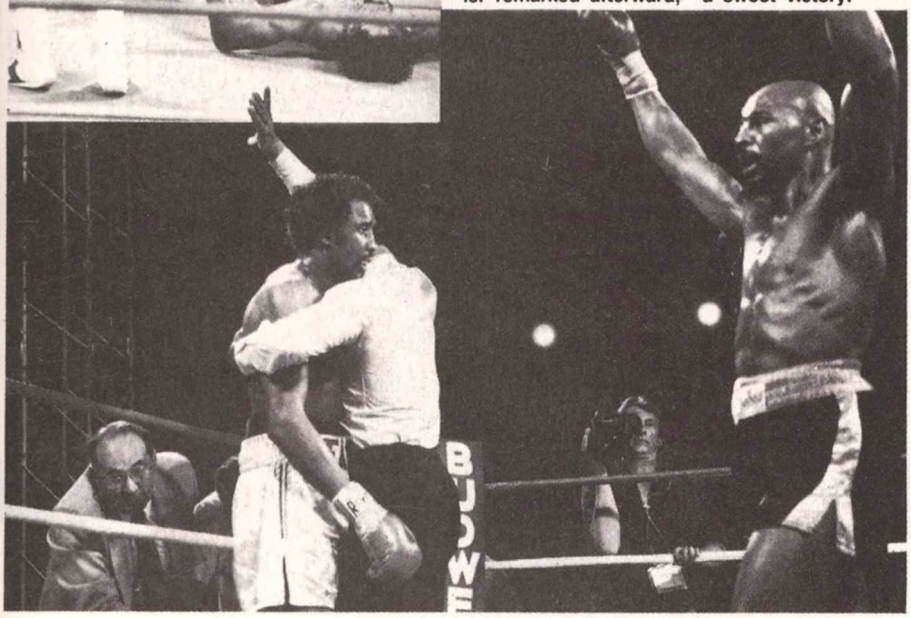
On the rampage: Blood streaming down his face and into his eyes, Hagler ferociously stalked Hearns and battered him relentlessly. The victory was Hagler's most awesome performance since his 1980 title-winning effort against Alan Minter.

way toward what he hoped would be the same kind of lucky night that Hagler had, a young Hispanic fan turned to his friend and said, "Hagler came out like he wanted to kill him." That impression would be shared by many others during the evening, from the rabid boxing enthusiasts who had traveled all the way from England, to the casual sports fan who was at the fight only for the purpose of selling T-shirts. *Finally,* Hagler had achieved the superstar status that he aimed for so long ago. And he had done so by finally delivering a performance that matched his image and appearance.

With his bald head and goatee, Hagler has always looked sinister. But he had never fought sinister. He was a counterpuncher who didn't possess one-punch power. Thus, he rarely charged right out and massacred an opponent, especially one of Hearns' caliber. In his Vegas superfight against Duran in November 1983, Hagler was incredibly cautious. He gained a 15-round decision, but his passiveness tarnished his *"destruct and destroy"* image. Against Hearns, Hagler completely neglected to display the respect that he showed for Duran and he was never discouraged by Hearns' right. That disregard for Hearns' power surprised many people, including the Hit Man. Asked why he rumbled with Hagler instead of boxing him in the first round, Hearns replied, "I had to. Marvin started running in and I had to protect myself, try to make Marvin respect me."

For three rounds, Hagler looked exactly like the executioner he always acted and talked like—outside the ring. If a fan needs a boxing hero or an example of the sport's true superstar, he will now look to Hagler. Marvelous played out the cliched role of the hero in all those boxing movies. He trained privately in Johnny Tocco's Gym, a stifling, one-floor prison far from The Strip, while Hearns worked out in front of a crowd of fans in a comfortable ballroom in Caesars. During the bitter war, Hagler, his face covered with blood (the hero bleeds in all those fight movies), ignored the pain of Hearns' right and furiously stalked his prey like a tiger. That is what was necessary before Hagler would be embraced as a hero for the masses, and not just a favorite of the avid boxing lover.

At the postfight press conference, a beaming Hagler said, "This is what you call a sweet victory. This was war. This was *war.* I wanted to do it better than Leonard and Duran and the other guys. Thomas came out the way you shouldn't against me, by trying to take it away from me. I felt good tonight, and I know what that means—*someone* is gonna fall." Before leaving the reporters, Hagler squelched rumors by making it clear that he would retire to his room in Caesars, but not from boxing. "I want to break Monzon's record," he said, referring to Carlos Monzon's mark of 14 middleweight defenses. Marvelous now has 11.



Hagler stretched Hearns out on the canvas (left), then stretched his arms out in triumph when referee Richard Steele finally halted the shootout (below). "This is what you call," Hagler remarked afterward, "a sweet victory."

With teary eyes, Hearns spoke to reporters about 30 minutes after the victor had left. "What can I say? It happens to the best of us," Hearns said. "It hurts. But the man showed his greatness tonight." Then, consoling himself over his failure to win a third of what he hoped would be an eventual four crowns, Hearns added, "I was picturing myself for four belts, but with belts on my chest, arms, waist, and legs, how the hell was I gonna walk?

"It was a damn good fight," Hearns added, "and if it happened once, let's do it again." To clear thinkers who don't believe life completely imitates art, a rematch seems unlikely. Hearns would first have to reestablish himself as a serious threat to Hagler, perhaps with a string of kayos and a little public relations work claiming that his hand injury played a vital role in his defeat. A second fight won't be an easy sell.

Both fighters would be advised to just campaign in separate divisions in the future. After the bout, Hearns visited Hagler's dressing room. He kissed the champion and said, "We made a lot of money, but we gave them a good show. Tell you what. You move up and fight the light heavies, and I'll take care of the middleweights." Hagler just laughed and said, "You move up."

Actually, Hearns will move *down,* back to 154 pounds to continue defending his WBC super welterweight crown, probably meeting John "The Beast" Mugabi in November. Hagler will resume his career in the fall, too, probably against James Shuler. Anticlimaxes? You bet. But even if they met again, Hagler and Hearns could probably never repeat the drama of that windy April night in the desert, and particularly the thrilling first round, a round that will live for as long as writers have typewriters and TV stations have film libraries.

Long after she had been overcome by emotion, a familiar figure stood among the reporters who were gathered in front of a TV screen at the postfight press conference. On the screen was a replay of that unbelievable opening three minutes of The Fight. For a moment, just a moment, the proud woman's pain was temporarily dulled, her sorrow forgotten, her eyes dried. Lois Hearns stood silently in front of the screen and watched intently. She had to. It was *that* special. □

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Marvelous Marvin Hagler: A Superstar at Last

Hagler's Status Soars Following Crushing Defeat of "Hit Man" Hearns.

By NIGEL COLLINS

IT WASN'T UNTIL A COUPLE OF days after his knockout over Thomas Hearns that the true measure of Marvelous Marvin Hagler's spectacular victory really hit home. I had returned from Las Vegas and was sitting in front of the television, allowing some silly sitcom to gradually lull me to sleep. But before Morpheus could carry me away to the Land of Nod, my attention was galvanized by the sight of "Marvelous Marvin" filling the TV screen.

He was munching on a slice of pizza pie, while in the background, somebody laid down some tasty blues licks on the guitar. After savoring a mouthful, the undisputed middleweight champion of the world lowered the pizza, smiled and said: "I was thinkin', I wonder what old-what's-his-name is having tonight?" Then, stifling a chuckle, Marvin nailed the punchline as deftly as he nailed Hearns . . . "Probably soup."

Although Hagler's savage knockout over Hearns had won him the adulation of the boxing world, the commercial for a national pizza chain proved that he has finally achieved recognition from a sanctioning body far more powerful than the WBC, WBA, or IBF—Madison Avenue.

The pizza commercial is not the only sign that Hagler has, at long last, reached superstar status. A rock video by Van Zant, currently being shown on television, also features Marvin posing and punching as rock-'n'-roll types cavort around the gym. The ironic thing about Hagler's sudden popularity with the mass media is that the same strictly-business image which limited his appeal in the past is now responsible for making him the most popular tough guy since Mr. T. Hagler didn't change to accommodate any press agent's script. There's still no phoney breast beating. Marvin just stayed true to himself, and eventually the rest of the world discovered how special an athlete he really is.

While it is true that Hagler is a "professional fighter" in every sense of the word, there is another side to his nature besides the snarling destroyer who turned the "Hit Man" into a horizontal zombie. Marvin has a very down-to-earth quality about him. Absolutely no pretention. He's the sort of guy you could imagine meeting for a few beers at the local taproom. That's probably the reason his pizza commercial (reportedly ad-libbed) comes off so well, In or out of the ring, Hagler is for real.

> "Tommy was a little cocky, and I had something for him."
> —Marvelous Marvin

For years, Hagler had been denied the acclaim he so richly deserved. It seemed that no matter how well he fought, or how often he defended his title against the best the middleweight division had to offer, there were always doubters, eager to find fault. When he splattered opponents all over the ring with devastating power, the critics said he was just a slugger. When he boxed with care and precision, as he did against Roberto Duran, they called him "Mediocre Marvin" and "Marginal Marv." It was as if Hagler had been cursed by the very versatility that made him such a great fighter in the first place. But then, the general public has seldom been known for its discriminating taste, or astute judgment. Like the stubborn mule, the populace often has to be hit over the head with a sledgehammer before they sit up and take notice. And that's exactly what Hagler eventually did by annihilating Hearns—the fighter so many had picked to beat him. He did it with all the ferocity and finality of an assassin's bullet. If any sceptics remain,

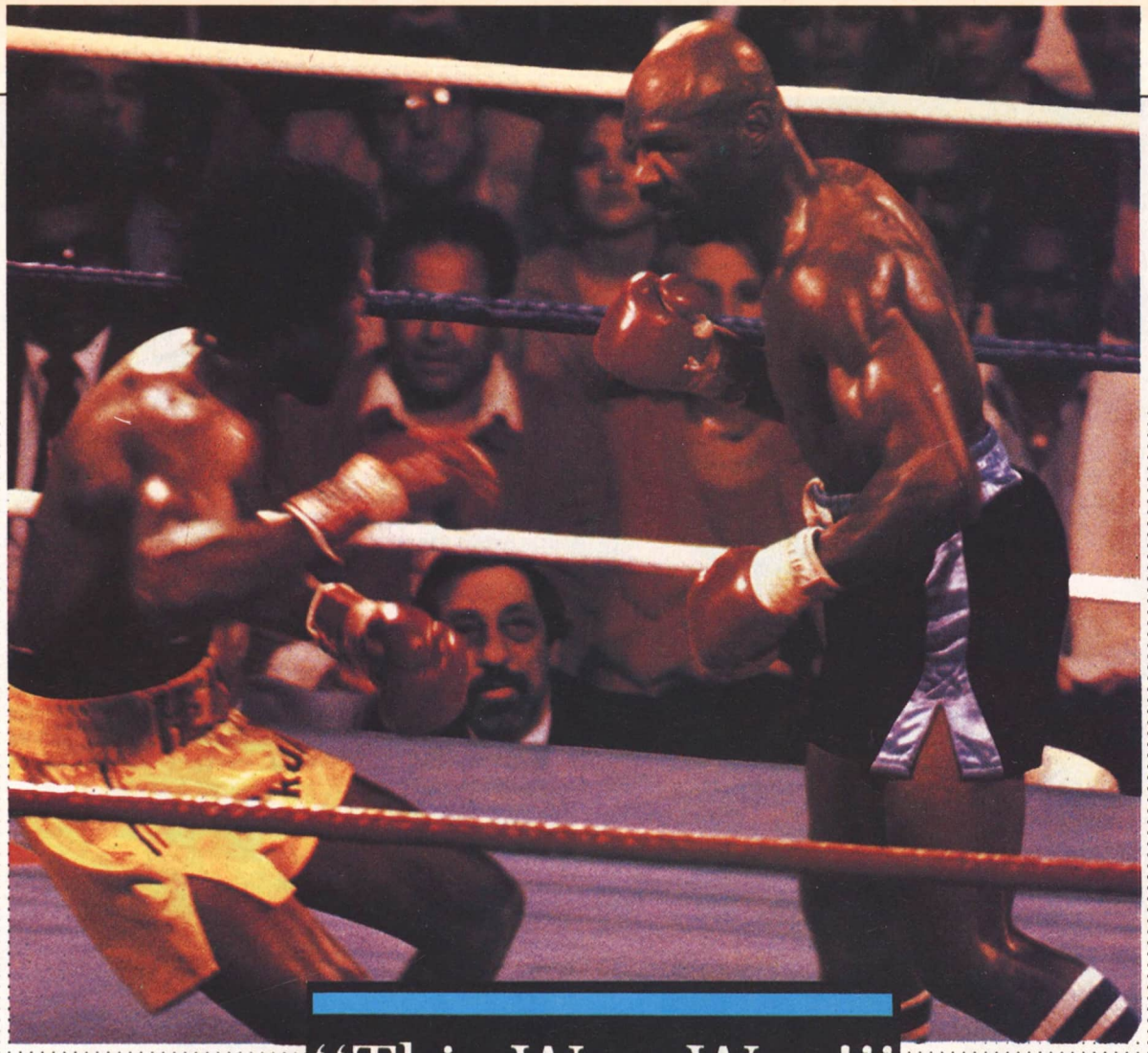


PHOTO: FRED STOCKER

"This Was War!"

—Marvelous Marvin

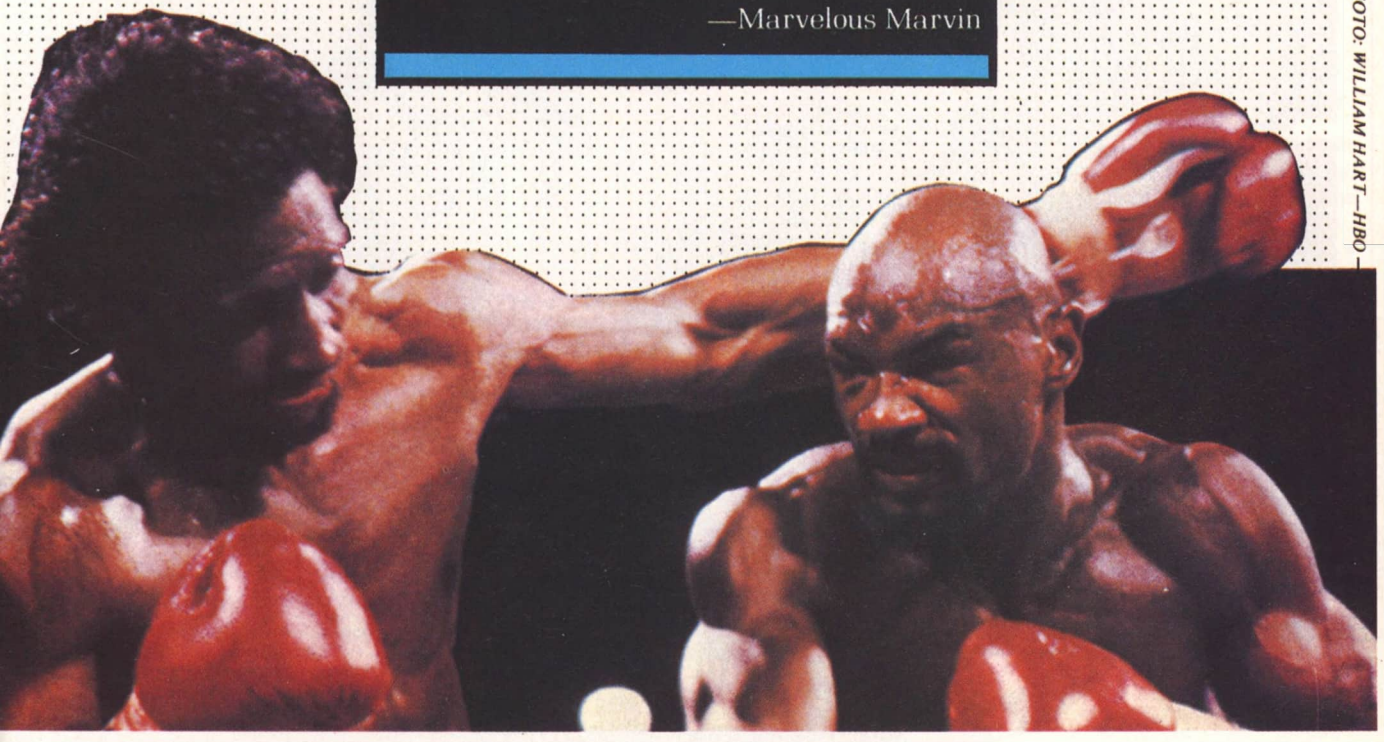


PHOTO: WILLIAM HART—HBO

PHOTO: WILLIAM HART—HBO

"The reason why I started out slugging is because I had to."
—Thomas Hearns

they deserve a fate far worse than Hearns'.

If Hagler's journey to fulfillment has been long and arduous, it has also helped forge the kind of man capable of the violence perpetrated on Hearns. When Hagler exploded out of his corner at the sound of the opening bell, it was as if he was fueled by the very frustration he's been forced to endure throughout his unappreciated career. If Marvin was a man possessed, as many claimed he appeared to be against Hearns, it was a possession tempered by several decades of grueling work and dedication to his trade. For as primitive as Hagler's attack may have seemed to the uninitiated, it was not the wild assault of a maniac, rather the controlled onslaught of a passionate warrior. In the illumination of hindsight, it is easy to see why Hearns never had a chance.

ALTHOUGH BY NOW MILLIONS OF words have been written about "The Fight"—as Bob Arum's publicity mill christened the Hagler-Hearns confrontation—it is worthy of at least this one more telling. The fight was everything anyone could have hoped it would be. The "midget" beat the "freak"—as Hagler and Hearns had taken to calling each other during the pre-fight war of words. And perhaps the most surprising of all, "The Fight" lived up to the hype.

As the challenger, Hearns was the first to make his appearance. He was ushered into the ring to the strains of the "Michigan State Fight Song." A cheer went up as Tommy ducked between the ropes and proceeded to stalk around the ring. He wore a scarlet robe and a serious look on his face. Hearns knew that it was time to put up, or shut up.

Mercifully, Hagler didn't make him wait too long. Soon, a hooded figure in blue velvet was seen shadow boxing his way towards the ring as the P.A. system blared a robust version of "The Stars And Stripes Forever." The aluminum bleachers seemed to shudder beneath the ovation that greeted the official introductions, and following referee Richard Steele's instructions, "The Fight" was on.

The capacity crowd of 15,141 packed into Caesars outdoor arena had been rather mellow during the tedium of the preliminaries and celebrity introductions. But once the fight started, all eyes were riveted on the ring. It was a little like watching a terrible, yet inevitable, accident. You knew you were about to witness something horribly savage, but still couldn't tear your eyes away. The air was suddenly alive with the kind of electricity only a great prizefight can generate.

One of the big questions before the fight was whether or not Hagler could penetrate Hearns' long-armed defense. Marvin missed his first swing, but soon caught Tommy with a right to the head, proving, if nothing else, that he could reach his target. The initial blow from Hagler backed Hearns into the ropes, but as the champion leaped forward, the "Hit Man" uncorked a wicked right to the head. It was the kind of punch that had destroyed 34 victims, including Pipino Cuevas and Roberto Duran. Hagler's knees buckled momentarily, but that was all. He recovered before Hearns could unleash another blow, and continued to press forward, winging bombs as he came.

While some later faulted Hearns for slugging it out instead of boxing, the savagery of Hagler's attack left him no alternative but to fight fire with fire.

"The reason why I started out slugging," admitted Hearns, "is because I had to. I was there. It presented itself. Marvin started running in. I had to protect myself. I had to show Marvin I deserved some respect."

Although he would eventually fall, Hearns showed championship heart in the heat of battle. He fought as he had never fought before, trading punches at an incredible rate. The problem was, that while Hearns was matching Hagler practically blow for blow, his best shots seemed to have little effect. On the other hand, every punch Hagler landed seemed to shake Tommy to his core.

Mid-way into the first, a large cut appeared on Hagler's forehead. It's difficult to know whether it was caused by a punch or a butt. At the rate Hagler and Hearns were going at each other, anything was possible. But although blood was coursing down Hagler's face at an alarming rate, he paid it no attention. He focused strictly on the job at hand—chopping the lanky Hearns down to size.

The non-stop pace continued throughout the first round. It was as if both men were caught up in a frenzied, life and death struggle. And indeed they were. When the bell rang, there was a sense among those present that they had witnessed something very special—an opening round to rival the best.

In a way, that first round also determined the outcome of the fight. Although he fought on for the better part of two more rounds, the punishment Hearns absorbed in the opening three minutes probably sealed his fate. Hearns may have landed 56 punches to Hagler's 50, according to an outfit known as Sports Information Data Base, but obviously, it was a case of quality winning out over quantity.

Willie deWit Held to Draw on Hagler-Hearns Undercard.

LAS VEGAS, NEV.—THE MOST INteresting moment of Bob Arum's rather uninspired undercard came when Canadian Olympic hero Willie deWit found himself on the seat of his pants, compliments of Alex Williamson, in the first round of their scheduled six-rounder. Williamson, fighting out of Miami Beach under the tutelage of Angelo Dundee, nailed deWit with a crisp right to the head for the bout's only knockdown. Although he continued to apply pressure in the second, Williamson seemed to run out of gas after that, allowing deWit to rally down the stretch for a draw. The scores were 57-56, Williamson; 59-55, deWit; and 57-57.

"He hit me a helluva shot, deWit said, "but I thought I won every other round. I was hitting him with a jab every time."

Williamson, 208¾, is now 5-1-2, four kayoes. DeWit, 210¾, Burnet, Texas, slipped to 3-0-1 with three kayoes. The referee was Joey Curtis.

In the official semi-final, Cubanito Perez, 139, Los Angeles, won a somewhat unpopular unanimous decision over Pat Jefferson, 138, Eugene, Oregon, 10, by scores of 97-93 (Jerry Roth), 96-93 (Herb Santos), and 98-91 (Dalby Shirley). The referee was Davey Pearl.

In a good slugfest, Luis Santana, 152½, Hawthorne, California, outpounched Darrell Chambers, 152¾, for a TKO 1:28 into the third round of a scheduled eight. The win lifted Santana to 27-2-1 with 21 kayoes. Chambers, another product of Detroit's Kronk gym, fell to 22-2, 16 kayoes. Referee, Curtis.

Rickey Womack, 175½, Detroit, struggled to a unanimous decision over David Vedder, 170½, San Jose, six. Referee, Pearl.

Andy Minsker, 129½, Milwaukie, Ore., TKO'd John Watkins, 127¾, Los Angeles, at 0:45 of the fourth round in their scheduled six. Referee, James Molinell.

Timekeepers—Jane Broadfoot, Charlie Roth.

Ringside Physicians—Dr. Flip Homansky, Dr. Donald Romero, Dr. Charles Filippini.

Top Rank, Inc.

(04-15-85)

How sweet it is! A triumphant Marvelous Marvin Hagler enjoys his moment of victory just seconds after stopping Thomas Hearns.

The day after the fight, it was revealed that Tommy had suffered a broken right hand. At exactly what point the fist gave way is difficult to ascertain, but the savage right uppercut that briefly stalled Hagler's charge in the early moments of the first is as good a guess as any. Because he stopped sparring six days prior to the fight, there was some speculation that Hearns may have come into the fight with damaged goods. While we haven't seen any evidence to support this theory, if Hearns went into the ring with Hagler in anything less than perfect condition, it was tantamount to committing suicide. But regardless of when the injury occurred, it should in no way detract from Hagler's great victory.

Hagler, 159¼, opened the second the same way he finished the first—full speed ahead, damn the torpedos. He clipped Hearns with a left hook and Tommy smiled. But for Hearns supporters there was precious little to laugh about. At one point, the challenger staggered without being hit, a sure sign that the first round had taken its toll on Tommy's legs.

For the first two minutes of the second, Hearns managed to stay away from most of Hagler's big bombs. He landed a lot of punches as Marvin pressured forwards, but Hagler kept coming, walking through the best the "Hit Man" had to offer.

"Marvin took away Tommy's right hand, that was the key," said Marvin's co-manager/trainer Pat Petronelli. "He ran right through that right hand, and when he (Hagler) knew he could do that, he knew he could do anything. He took away Tommy's legs and he took away Tommy's heart."

Late in the session, Hagler wobbled Hearns into the ropes with a left-right combination. For the remainder of the round, Hearns was stuck to the ropes like a fly to flypaper, with Hagler giving him a brutal working over. At the bell, Marvin gave Tommy a disdainful look and reluctantly turned to his corner. Hearns half-strutted and half-staggered back to his resting place, a weak-looking smile creasing his lips. He flopped on the stool, looking like a moth who had strayed too close to the falme, and suddenly understood that "the heat" could be deadly.

"I knew I had him," Hagler said. "He went back (to his corner) a little slow after the second round.

But victory is a fickle mistress. She was not quite ready to be claimed. There was yet another twist to this drama.

Hearns, 159¾, had spent most of the third round on his bicycle, flicking out jabs when the referee called "time out" for the ringside physician to take a look at Hagler's lacerated forehead. A collective groan went up from the crowd, while closed-circuit promoters around the country held their breath. But Dr. Donald Romeo inspected the wound and quickly waved Hagler back into action.

"I was a little afraid," Hagler admitted later. "But when I saw that blood, I turned into a bull. That's when I knew I had to get serious and get the job done quickly."

Quickly is almost an understatement. No sooner had hostilities resumed than Hagler lashed out with a vicious right. The blow struck Hearns on the temple with such an impact, Tommy was sent stumbling backwards across the ring. Another right kept Hearns going back, and then, after missing a left hook, Marvin applied the finisher—another hard right to the cheek.

Hearns collapsed on Hagler's shoulder and then slid down to the floor, rolling over onto his back, arms outstretched. As Steele took up the count it looked extremely doubtful that Hearns would get up.

He finally groped his way to his hands and knees at around five, and then bravely tottered to his feet as the count reached nine. Steele took a good look at the stricken fighter and wisely terminated the contest at 2:01 of the third.

"I knew he had had enough," reported Steele. "His eyes were glazed; his legs were wobbly."

There was no protest from Hearns' corner. One member of his camp picked Tommy up in his arms like a baby and carried him back to the corner. The expression on Hearns' face was that of a man who had survived a plane crash and was shocked that he had lived to tell the tale.

"What can I say?" asked Hearns, still having difficulty getting his breath 35 minutes after the conclusion of his ordeal. "It happens to the best of us. I'm just glad I'm in great physical condition. I'm not hurt. I thank the Lord for letting me come out not being damaged in any way.

"I'm a winner. I don't take defeat easily. I have to give Marvin his proper respect for being a great champion. He's been a great champion and he proved it tonight."

It's hard to say what's ahead for Hearns. While this was only his second loss in 42 pro bouts (34 kayoes), it was also his second knockout defeat. In the first round, he provided Hagler with more competition than Marvin had seen in practically all of his 10 previous title defenses put together. But will the experience leave him gun-shy and vulnerable to the punches of John (The Beast) Mugabi, the mandatory challenger for Tommy's WBC junior middleweight crown?

What about a rematch with Hagler? It will take time for Hearns' hand to heal, and, despite the thrilling nature of the fight, it is hard to imagine a rematch with Hagler in the foreseeable future. Perhaps promoter Arum put it best when he asked: "How do you convince people that if they fought again in six months the result would be any different?"

That brings us to the lone sore spot of the evening. What convinced judge Dick Young (not to be confused with the New York *Post* columnist of the same name) to score the first two rounds for Hearns? His colleagues, Herb Santos and Harry Gibbs, agreed with *The Ring*, giving both completed rounds to the eventual winner.

Hagler, however, wasn't expecting any favors from the scorekeepers. He's been burned in Vegas before, and knew better than to leave anything to chance. But by the time he appeared at the post-fight press conference, Marvin was the epitome of the gracious winner.

"Tommy is a good fighter. I won't take nothing away from him. He's a very courageous man. He came out the only way you can to try and take it away from the champion. But Tommy was a little cocky, and I had something for him.

"I felt that I wanted to do it better than (Sugar Ray) Leonard. But I still can't take anything from Tommy. It takes two to tango, two to make a great fight. When I came out, I told my trainers that I felt good. When I feel good like that, somebody has to fall. This is what you call a sweet victory. This was war!"

And indeed it was an uncompromising war that catapulted Marvin to the pinnacle of his career. Of course, the big question for Marvin is, where does he go from here? Are there any more mountains to climb? One goal that he plans to strive for is Carlos Monzon's record of 14 consecutive middleweight title defenses. Although there are no super fights on the horizon, there are plenty of guys like James Shuler and Mugabi around to fill out his dance card. Arum also dreams of a future fight with WBA welterweight boss Donald Curry. But that intriguing match is way down the road.

One fight you won't be seeing is Hagler and Michael Spinks. Marvin has no desire to move up in weight. He's always been a natural middleweight, and probably always will be.

"It's not in my vision to do something like that," explained Hagler, when asked if he had thoughts of capturing the 175-pound belt. "I've worked very hard to control the middleweights. And I don't see, after establishing control and showing that you're king of the mountain, just giving it up to move on. I'd like them to bring in any of those tough middleweights out there so I can beat Carlos Monzon's record and then think about hanging them up."

The Hagler-Hearns fight was very important, not only to the two contestants and their followers, but to boxing in general. The old racket needed a showcase fight, and this one delivered beyond expectations. It also did something quite unexpected. It made Hagler a star. His consummate performance against Hearns forced everyone to wake up to the fact that there was one helluva fighter in their midst. Now even the most obtuse observer realizes what Marvin and his fans have known all along—Marvin *is* Marvelous.

Just ask old what's-his-name. □

Hearns flat on his back, shows the effects of his war with Marvin Hagler.

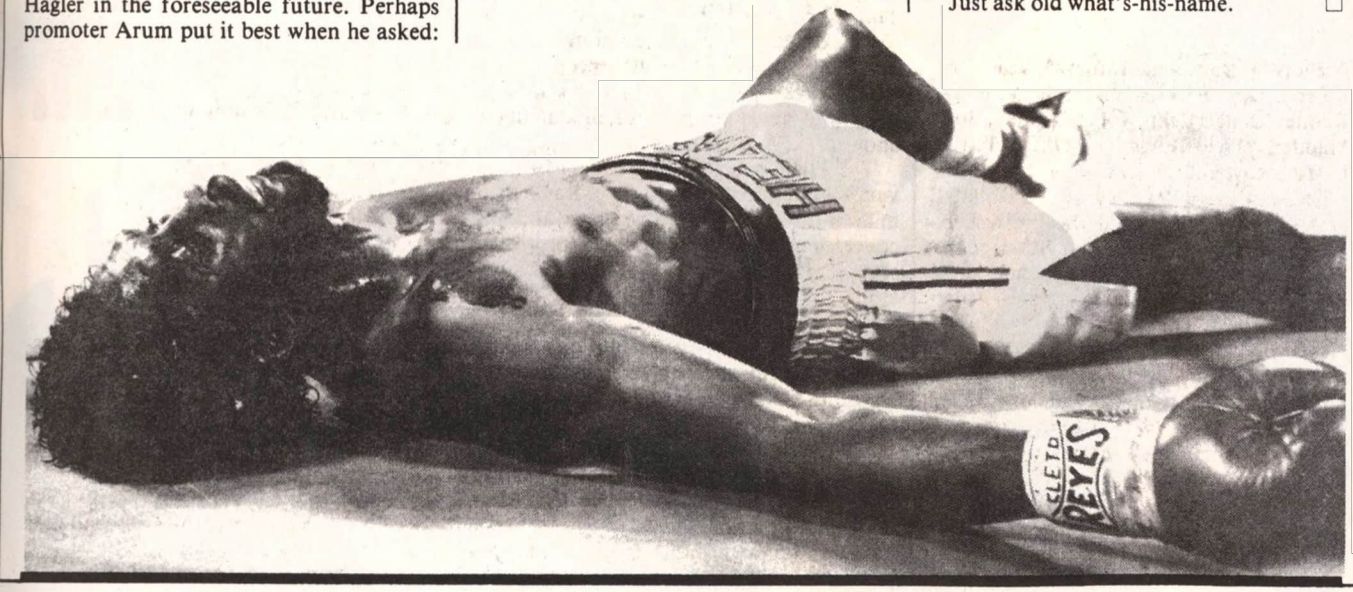


PHOTO: ASSOCIATED PRESS

Thinking Back...

MARVELOUS MARVIN HAGLER

ON THE NIGHT THAT GUARANTEED HIM RESPECT

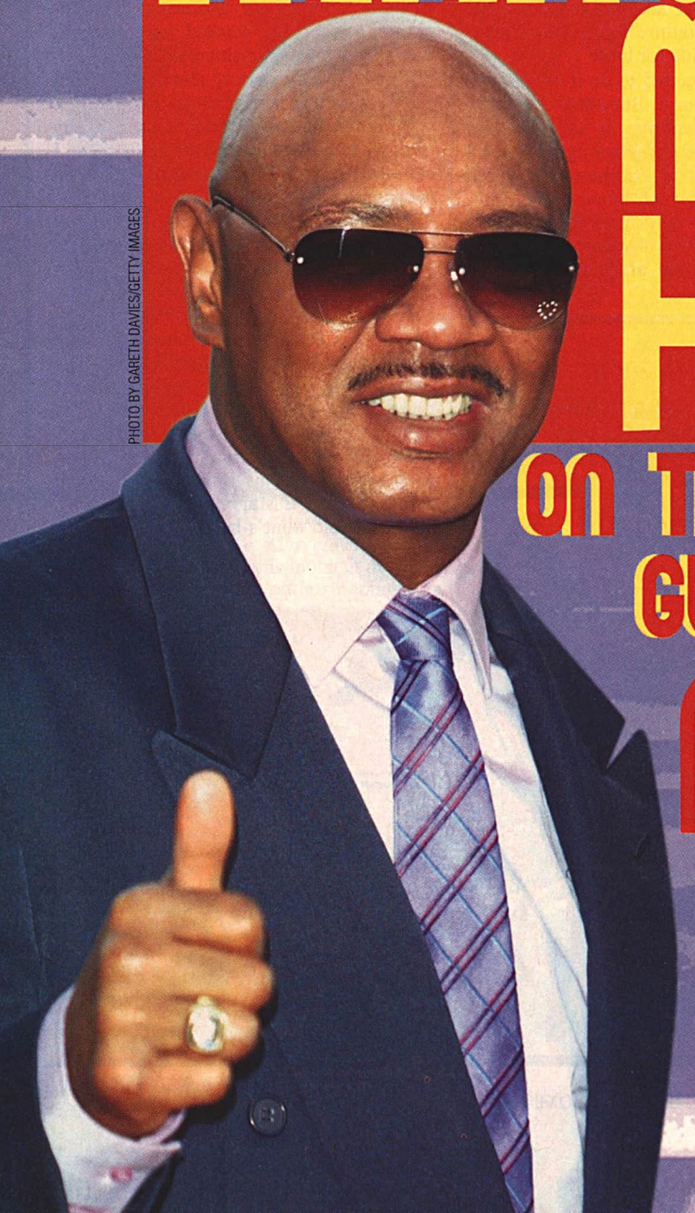


PHOTO BY GARETH DAVIES/GETTY IMAGES

If Anyone Wanted To Take My Title Away, They'd Have To

KILL ME

A strong north wind blew through Las Vegas on Monday night, April 15, 1985, but 20 years later Marvelous Marvin Hagler seems constantly to be cosseted by a cool breeze coursing gently through his soul. He has lived for half a century now and radiates contentment and inner calm. Once he was the ultimate man of war, telling his corner at the end of that eternally lasting first round against "The Hit Man," Tommy Hearns: "I'm not worried about the cut. If you go to war, you are going to get wounded." Now he lives happily in Italy with his wife, Kay, makes movies, dines in nice restaurants, and takes pleasure from less violent pursuits in life.

In a boxing career that spanned 67 fights, there were many performances that defined him, but none more purely than that night in the open air at Caesars Palace, when a rage that might have been borrowed from Genghis Khan consumed the ring and left an enduringly terrifying memory. "Who should Hagler fight after that," asked one awestruck observer who answered his own question with a shiver: "How about Russia?" But that Hagler, ogre-like and ruthless, is a man of the past.

Brian Doogan, THE RING's European correspondent, spoke to him at his home in Milan about his three-round war with Hearns.

PHOTO BY JAMIE MCDONALD/GETTY IMAGES

Hagler, who now lives in Milan, Italy, poses with his wife, Kay, at the Laureus Sports Dinner in Estoril, Portugal. "The Marvelous One" has mellowed considerably over the years, but still shows immense pride when talking about his legendary boxing career.

Doogan reports: "Marvin was the perfect gentleman, very welcoming, as was his wife, and very generous with his time. Over the years, Hagler has mellowed. His disposition is warm and friendly. He loves his new life in Milan. But there is enough of the fighter still in him to make you shudder at the thought of a director yelling, 'Cut,' and Hagler mistakenly believing that it might be him. Some images are just life-lasting, and the night Hagler was cut by Hearns is certainly one."

The Ring: Did the fight against Thomas Hearns represent the pinnacle of your career?

Marvelous Marvin Hagler: I wouldn't say it was the pinnacle of my career, but I'd call it the highlight. If things had worked out and I'd got the decision against (Ray) Leonard and stayed champion, I probably would have gone on to take (Carlos) Monzon's record. But it probably happened for the best because that fight gave me more respect around the world and helped me be even more popular. So many people felt my pain and saw that I was robbed. But fighting a guy like Tommy Hearns, I call that the highlight of my career because it's about underlining your greatness, knowing you're the best middleweight out there, the king of your territory. That's what I was.

The Ring: Recognition of this was something that you always felt you were denied. How much did this spur you on, especially going into the showdown with "The Hit Man"?

MMH: This played a big part in my career. Holding my belt and representing the middleweight championship meant a lot to me. I genuinely felt that if anyone wanted to take my title away, they'd have to kill me. I really believed that. And I felt I was something special. Deep inside I knew this. They just weren't paying attention, certain people in the game. So this was the moment to bring it out, to show people once and for all the greatness inside me.

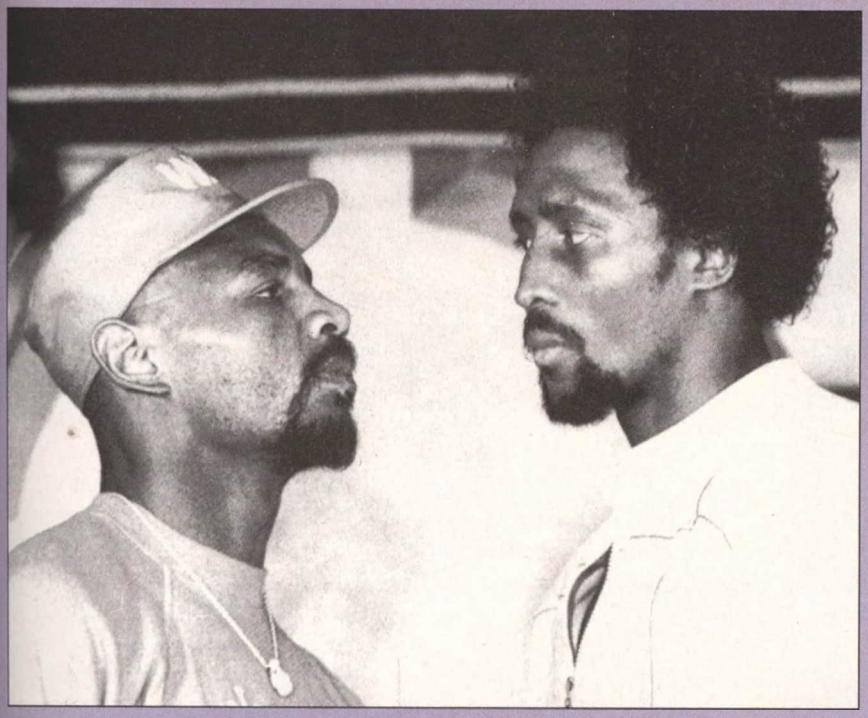
It was there all along, but the press had always found a way to cover it up throughout my career. I didn't get the big paydays, I didn't get the opportunities, and these injustices festered inside me. All of this was bubbling up underneath this fight, and on the night I fought Tommy, it all came out like an explosion. I showed the world in an unmistakable way that I was the best fighter out there. To accomplish your goals in life, you gotta take the positive stuff and you gotta take the negative stuff and combine it because it helps you work that much harder. I knew my job was to destruct and destroy the night I fought Tommy and not leave anything in doubt. These two fists, these were my judges. I was the judge for this fight.

The Ring: So for Marvelous Marvin Hagler, it was all about respect, the night of April 15, 1985.

MMH: You're searching for respect your whole career, looking for that credibility. If you deserve it, they should give it to you. To be honest, the way they held it back just made me meaner and meaner. The commentators, the press, they always talked about there being a possibility of me losing. They never gave me my credit. This was the story of my life. But I'd just keep rolling. And then it all came out, in that fight against Hearns. I mean, how many fights does it take to become champion, to really feel like you are champion and have all the people acknowledge this? I never concentrated on money or fame. I just wanted to be known and respected as a champion, to leave a mark for my kids or be recognized for something I'd done that was great for boxing. So many great champions, even Muhammad Ali, Larry Holmes, they lose and you have people calling them a bum, saying, "I could've licked you myself." What kind of stuff is that? I never wanted to give anyone the opportunity to say that about me. That's what I was thinking going into the fight with Tommy.

The Ring: What were your thoughts on Hearns at that point, the fighter and the man? He was established as one of the elite fighters of this time, but not at middleweight. Did you have a disdain for this man moving up in weight to challenge you or, deep down, did you respect him?

MMH: It takes two to tango and it takes two big names to make a fight as huge an attraction as my fight against Tommy was. Here was a guy who had been world welterweight champion, junior middleweight



Hagler and Hearns go eyeball-to-eyeball during the media tour to hype their fight. By the time the 26-city tour was over, Hagler had worked up a healthy dislike for his challenger, who persisted in calling the champ the "midget." That dislike helped fuel Hagler's in-ring performance.

champion, and he wanted to take my title, take everything I had worked for over all those years. So I respected the challenge. I was the king of this division. If you want to take away my kingdom, you're not gonna have it easy. You'd better be in position to batter me with a ringpost if you want to come do something like that.

I remember we toured something like 26 cities to promote the fight and we started not liking one another. Tommy's ugly—all the fighters I fought were ugly, except "Pretty Boy" (Leonard)—and I got tired of looking at his ugly face and listening to his big mouth. He would say, "I'm going to knock your bald head off," and I'd reply, "Good. That means you're showing up." And believe me, you sign that contract to fight and say you're gonna turn up, that's when my meanness starts. That's the way I was.

The Ring: You seemed to nurture that meanness in the Spartan setting of your training camp in Provincetown, in the northeastern tip of Cape Cod, a place exposed to extreme elements.

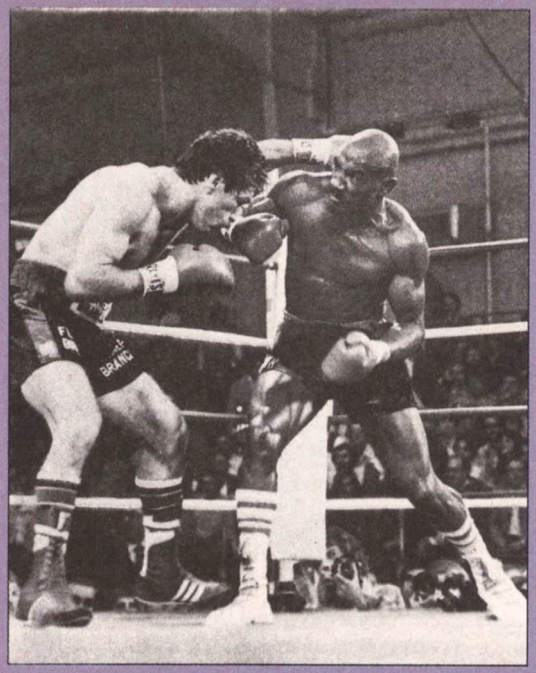
MMH: I went up to Provincetown to train for the longest period I ever trained for a title fight. Two-and-a-half months. No sex. No alcohol. No dancing. No theater. I was going to war and that place was like being in jail. They had nothing down there that was interesting. Seemed to me like it couldn't have changed much from when the Pilgrims first landed, which made it the perfect place to prepare your mind for the battle to come. The final weeks we moved camp to Palm Springs.

I had sparring partners who were tall and lanky with good right hands and very flexible, because Tommy sometimes didn't stand still and his right hand was dangerous. Just like Monzon, who had nothing in his left, but had a good right. So we had Bobby "Boogaloo" Watts and Willie Monroe in to prepare, old opponents of mine, both tall and rangy with good right-hand power. I just felt the need to work that much harder for this fight, so I was getting up for 4:30 a.m. runs and I kept that drive going right to the end. I give a lot of credit to my trainers who worked real hard with me. We bounced everything around and I knew what Goody (Petronelli) was saying was good because we collaborated on all my fights and we always had a very stringent training process. You gotta have your stuff together before you step in that ring. Reflexes and timing are your most vital attributes, and you gotta work to have these on the night or you'll lose them. Training was always the easiest part for me. In fact, I've always felt that the Hearns fight should have been easier, because I worked so hard.

The Ring: In the opening round, in the opening half-minute, in fact, you were served notice that it might not be so easy when Hearns cracked you with his best right hand. Did you feel Tommy's power immediately and react to that, or was it something else that made you engage from the opening bell with such ferocious intensity?

MMH: I didn't feel the power of Tommy's right hand, not once. I got cut in the opening round and I knew I was cut. But it wasn't from a punch. I really didn't feel one right hand that he threw, not one. I actually wanted Tommy to throw his right, to keep throwing his right. To me, this was

Hagler joins trainer Emanuel Steward, Hearns, and Ray Leonard at a WBC convention in 1993. Although Hagler and Hearns have become friends, Marvelous Marvin still retains a bitter dislike for Leonard, who he feels never showed him the proper respect.



Hagler was determined to knock out Hearns because he felt the Las Vegas judges had robbed him of the middleweight title when he challenged Vito Antuofermo there in 1979 (pictured). Antuofermo kept the title via draw, but Hagler took the fight out of the judges' hands against Hearns.

good. If he couldn't hurt me—and he didn't—I knew this would shake him up, the realization that he just could do nothing to shut me down. *You get that ringpost or I'm going nowhere.* He knew this, and that's a hard feeling to have deep down in the pit of your stomach.

You know, all it did, that frenetic start to the fight, was make me madder. His right hand just didn't bother me. I got inside and got to work. That was my game plan, to take away his powerpunch. You have to be a moving target when you fight a guy like Tommy Hearns, and in the first round, everything came together because I'd gone through it in the training process. I was prepared in all areas, physically and mentally. He tried to knock me out in the first round with his big right hand, but I honestly didn't feel it. I was just caught up so much in the heat of battle. I've watched the fight since and I still get excited by it. I still get chills, which remind me of the way I felt that night.

The Ring: Describe the way you felt that night.

MMH: I always had this thing that I just couldn't go out on my back. I couldn't leave that way. So I said that if I had to die, that's the way I'd go out. My mother, Mae Lane, she would say to me, "No, Marvin, don't say that." But she got used to it, me being in tough bouts and getting whacked. She had to. She'd sit there at ringside, and I wouldn't even recognize her, even if I looked straight at her. There was only the other guy and me the moment I stepped in that ring. But nothing she ever saw in there changed her view of me, even if I was banged up. She waited for me after the Hearns fight to come out of my dressing room and she was just like she always was: "Oh, my baby, it's only my baby." But her baby was ready for war. And it was war. I knew it was going to be war. I was prepared for war.

The Ring: And a war was what it was. But was there anything more than that to your strategy?

MMH: I started figuring out his game because I was always a thinking fighter. It's instinctive. Combination punches should just come out. You don't have time to step back and think about it. If he backs up, you have to go make him fight, confuse him with head movement. He had a way of holding his right hand, and if he didn't fire it, *whack*, I'd get in there with a hard punch. That's what a championship fight is all about. Of course, it's about who has the most skill, but it's also about who wants it most.

The Ring: You also felt that you weren't being helped at all by the referee, Richard Steele.

MMH: I couldn't understand why Richard Steele kept pulling me away when I'd be fighting inside. He should have known that, as the smaller guy, I had to fight inside. When Steele began moving in, I started to feel something negative. He was almost preventing me from firing punches, coming back with the right uppercut to counter his right. I really felt I had to overcome the referee as well.

The Ring: There was also the cut that opened during the first round. Were you worried about the cut, especially when Steele brought up the ring doctor to inspect it in the third round?

MMH: They had told me in the corner that the cut wasn't too dangerous and to continue doing what I was doing. The doctor had a look and asked me how I was, and I think I replied, "I ain't missing him, am I?" That seemed good enough for him.

I knew the cut wasn't over one of my eyes. It was in the middle of my forehead. But I also knew that I was in Las Vegas, where they bet on cockroaches crossing the road, and I'd been done in this town before when they gave Vito Antuofermo a draw the first time I fought for the title. I knew what could happen again, and this fight was just too important to me to allow it to be settled by someone else's hands. Despite the blood, I had him at the end of the first round and the bell rang. Then I had to get back in, work my way inside again, and in the second round I caught him with some very good punches, to the

Hagler greets some of his many fans at the International Boxing Hall of Fame. He now considers himself a goodwill ambassador for boxing and returns to Canastota every year for induction weekend.

PHOTO BY PAT ORR

Hagler is always the center of attention wherever he goes, and even other famous fighters are eager to have their photograph taken with him. He poses here with (from left to right) Winky Wright, Christy Martin, Ken Buchanan, Antonio Tarver, and Iran Barkley.

point where I had him going. The third round, it was time to finish the show.

The Ring: Did you feel Hearns weakening?

MMH: I knew I was close to knocking this guy out. He didn't have much on his punches, but the telltale sign to me was in his eyes. They started changing. Hearns was a cocky guy and very dangerous. But suddenly, in his eyes, I saw respect for me, acknowledgement that I was dangerous and there was nothing at all he could do to stop me. He started to appreciate that I was the better fighter, that maybe he'd taken me a bit for granted, and now it was too late for him to do anything about it because the fire was under his ass. I remember I ran across the ring to throw those final punches. There was just no way I was going to let him escape.

The Ring: What did Hearns say to you when he came to your dressing room?

MMH: He said, "Good fight. You're a tough warrior." And I told him the same. I said, "It took both of us to make this happen." Tommy's a man. He showed me what he's about that night and that always makes me feel comfortable when I talk about that person. The same with Roberto Duran. He didn't give a s___ about any man he fought. Mustafa Hamsho as well. To overcome these guys, you had to give them a beating. But I had other things to overcome also, like Larry Merchant (the HBO analyst), who never gave me credit, and this really hurt me. He never told people about the great champion I was. He'd say I still hadn't proved myself. So I asked him, "Do you think I'm a great fighter now?" He looked at me and replied, "Well Marvin, I gotta tell you that you are." *Thank you, Larry*, I thought. I'd been waiting for that for a helluva long time.

The Ring: Whenever you meet Hearns now, there is genuine warmth. I think the last time was several years ago in London when you were both at the opening of the Kronk Gym. Is there a special bond there because it was such a special fight? And is that fight your ultimate legacy to your sport, the ultimate demonstration of Marvelous Marvin Hagler?

MMH: Right now I'm an ambassador for boxing. Every year I go to the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota and it's a great place for any fighter and for any fight fan to go. You run into guys that you lost to or knocked out and you're able to say hello and shake hands, and it gives you a resting place as a fighter, a spot where you will go down in history. I remember when I was inducted, I just thought, *Wow!* I figured I was too young to be here, seeing names like Joe Louis, Joe Frazier, George Foreman, Muhammad Ali, Sugar Ray Robinson, Willie Pep, Carlos Ortiz, and Emile Griffith. It's such an honor. I'll say to Bob Foster, one of the best light heavyweights ever, "Hey Bob, how'd the fight go, you and Joe Frazier?" And he'll reply, "That SOB hit me with a left hook that picked my foot up, my whole body." And it's said with such respect for the man. You see it in men like Alexis Arguello and Aaron Pryor, how they get along. When fighters respect one another, they come to a truth about one another. That's why I say there's something missing in Leonard. There's no love. There's not the respect there that you see between George Foreman and Joe Frazier because they showed to one another they're real men.

With Tommy, both of us understand each other. It was a great fight. One of us had to win and one of us had to lose. But that night I'd have lost to no man and that's the truth that we both know. ■

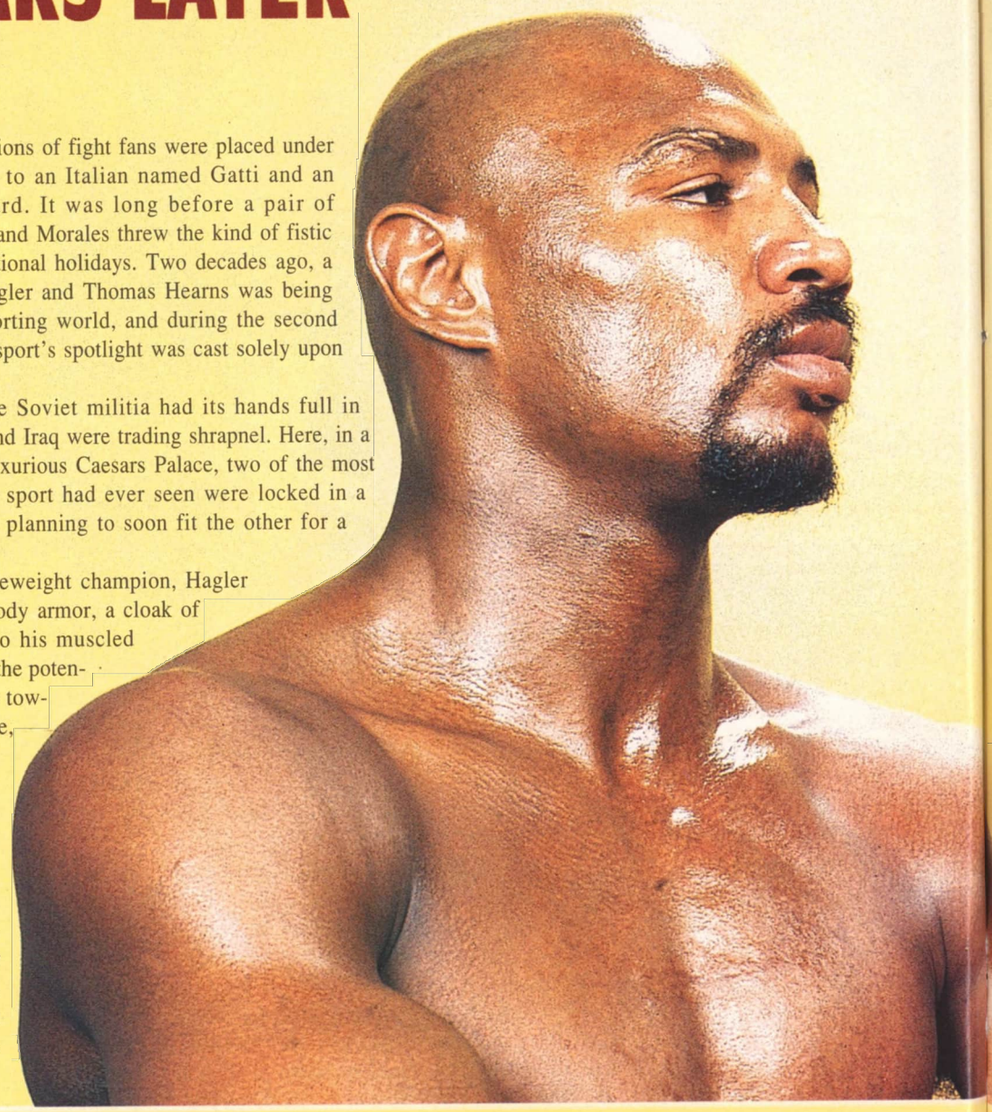
HAGLER-HEARNS
20 YEARS LATER

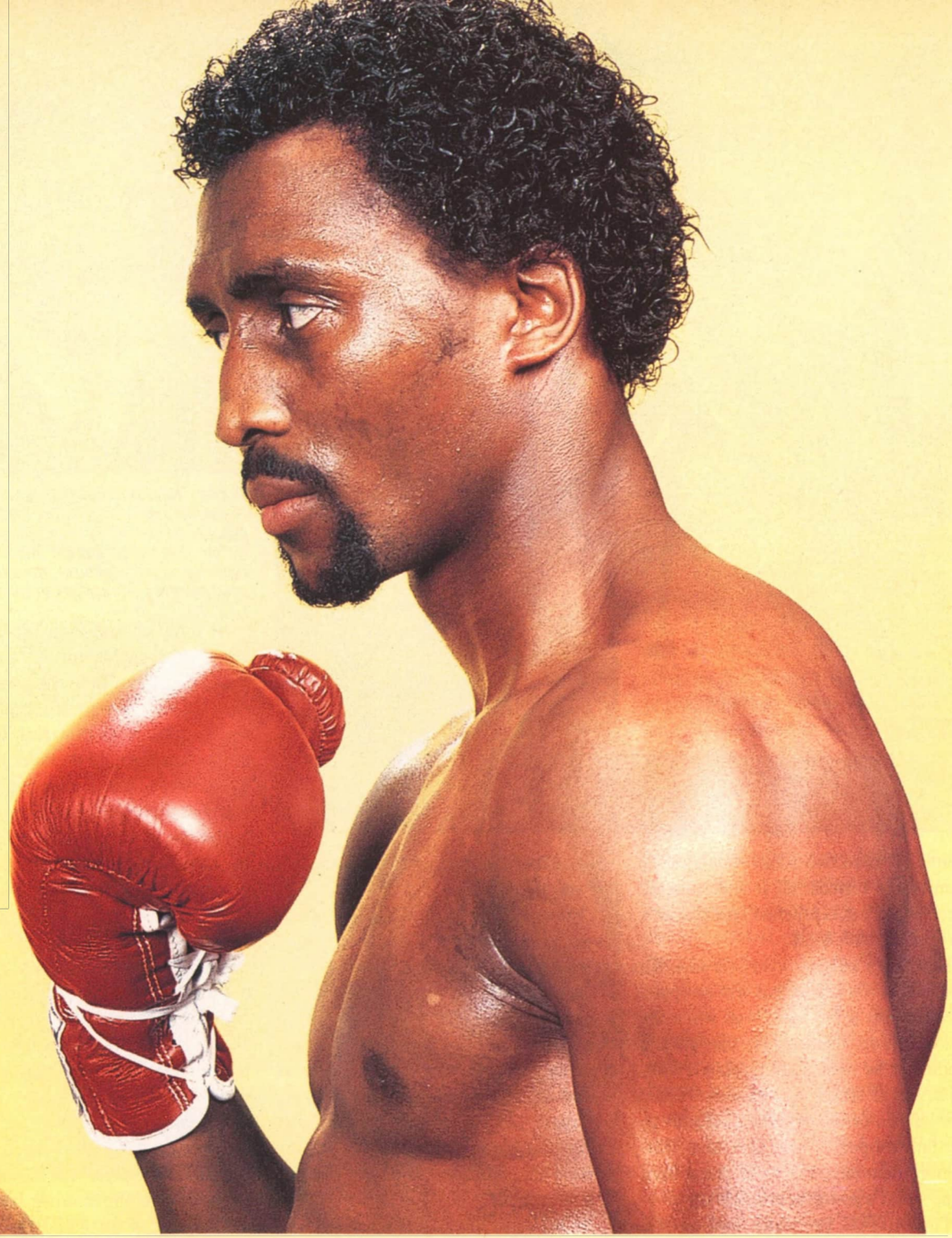
By Ted Bodenrader

It was long before millions of fight fans were placed under cardiac arrest thanks to an Italian named Gatti and an Irishman named Ward. It was long before a pair of Mexicans named Barrera and Morales threw the kind of fistic fiestas they declare as national holidays. Two decades ago, a fight between Marvin Hagler and Thomas Hearns was being hyped throughout the sporting world, and during the second week of April, 1985, the sport's spotlight was cast solely upon Nevada's Sin City.

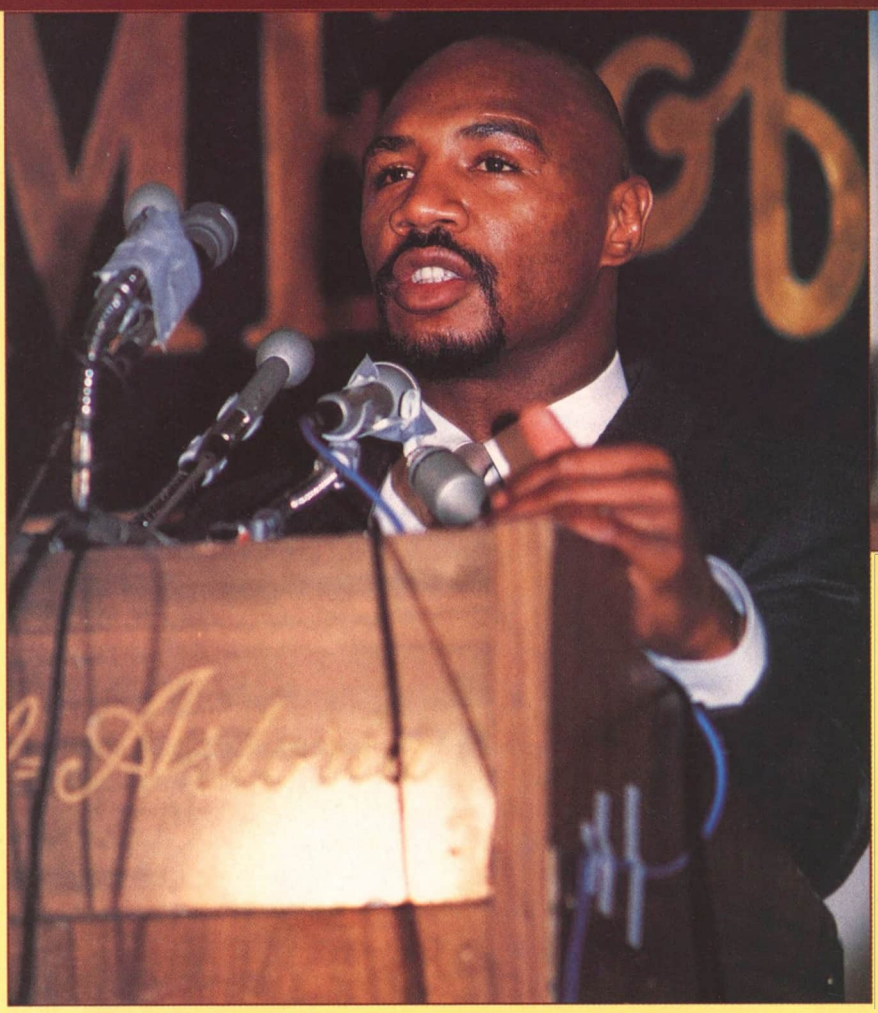
Around the world, the Soviet militia had its hands full in Afghanistan, while Iran and Iraq were trading shrapnel. Here, in a conference room at the luxurious Caesars Palace, two of the most fearsome combatants the sport had ever seen were locked in a glare, eyeball-to-eyeball, planning to soon fit the other for a plastic body bag.

As the reigning middleweight champion, Hagler wore his greatness like body armor, a cloak of invincibility chiseled into his muscled torso. The only man with the potential to penetrate it was the towering Hearns, whose huge, gnarling hands were wrapped around the neck of a microphone. Reporters from around the globe had gathered in hordes, ready to dissect this middleweight matchup inside and out, every which way they could. On the dais, whatever trash talk came from the





Still The War By Which All Others Are Measured



Thomas Hearns (above) listens patiently as Marvin Hagler (left) tells the media what he's going to do to "The Hit Man" when he gets him inside of the ring. But the middleweight title fight was such a natural attraction it didn't need any hype or trash talk to sell it.

mouths of these two rivals didn't really mean much. Instead, all it took was the three simple letters stitched into Hagler's cap to tell it all—WAR.

And that's exactly what this was. To those who knew better, this was no sporting event, no prize fight. And when the first bell rang, the struggle that ensued would not be over a shiny plastic belt. What was at stake was the deep-rooted pride of two of the greatest gladiators to ever throw a punch, both of whom wanted more than anything to be recognized as the world's premiere middleweight.

That night, the fans and media crammed into Caesars outdoor stadium to take in what promoters simply named "The Fight." The feeling of peril filled the air like nitro, ready to transform into an explosion. Whereas we always knew each serving of Arturo Gatti-Micky Ward would deliver the goods, we never had the feeling of serious danger in our midst, nor the possibility that one principal would not walk away at fight's end but rather be carried away. But in 1985, you really did get the feeling that somebody's life was on the line.

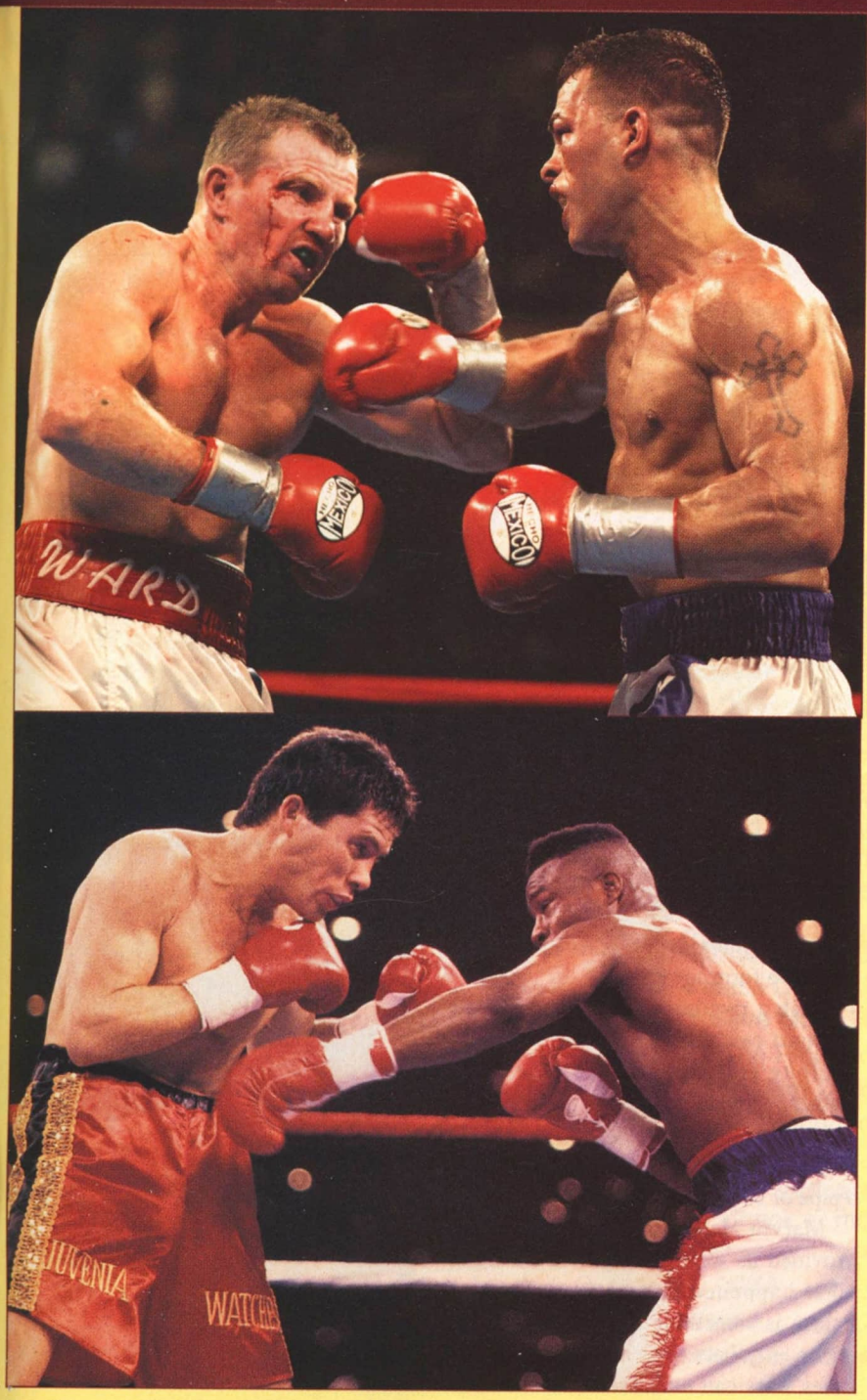
Moreover, we knew that when it was over, if both men had survived, they wouldn't be toasting shot glasses at the casino lounge or hitting the local tees for a friendly 18 holes. No, the hatred between them had been brewing for months. It began before the deal was signed and didn't end until the wee hours of April 15. The meaty purse split between them was significant, but the bottom line was pride, an entire lifetime's worth of it.

In the eight minutes that we've come to know as the Hagler-Hearns slugfest, there was nothing in boxing's past that surpassed it for raw, lethal warfare. Less than three pulsating rounds offered up more action, more reckless danger, than all three *Die Hard* films combined. It ended with Hagler's arms raised in the air, blood gushing from a wound in the middle of his forehead, while Hearns lay at his feet like a slain giant, his arms outstretched like limbs of a downed tree.

It took several moments before we could even gasp about it as the boxing world tried to collectively catch its breath from such an exhilarating display. But for the decade or so that followed, those three rounds would become the standard of excellence for anything that involved two-fisted competition. Every fight that raised our blood pressure in the slightest degree somehow found "Hagler-Hearns" in its description.

In 1990, Julio Cesar Chavez' thrilling knockout of Meldrick Taylor was tabbed the "first Hagler-Hearns of the new decade." In 1992, the first Riddick Bowe-Evander Holyfield tilt turned out to be a "heavyweight Hagler-Hearns." In 1997, featherweight Prince Naseem Hamed gunned down Kevin Kelley in a "pint-sized Hagler-Hearns."

Then, in 2002, Ward and Gatti created a brutal masterpiece that has also worked its way into the boxing lexicon as a benchmark of unabated savagery. But unlike Hagler-Hearns some 17 years before it, the three Gatti-Ward fights, while no less thrilling, were sometimes criticized as merely glorified clubfights, as neither counterpart was a member of the sport's elite class. Hagler-Hearns, on the other hand, was a clash between two of the game's most revered practitioners, a showdown between legends, men whose names were spoken wherever boxing fans gathered from Los Angeles to London.



Over the years, the Hagler-Hearns slugfest has become a benchmark for other fights to live up to. Consequently, ring wars such as Micky Ward-Arturo Gatti I (top), the first Julio Cesar Chavez-Meldrick Taylor match (above), and other thrilling shootouts are typically compared to Hagler-Hearns.

Still, the way Hagler-Hearns was fought, it could have gone down on any street corner, in any parking lot, under any bridge throughout America. Yes, it was sweet, but there was very little scientific about it. We were also reminded that the drama didn't need to stretch out over the course of 12 or 15 rounds to qualify as an instant classic. Somehow, it seemed more fitting that this chapter of boxing mayhem was packed tightly into less than three electrifying rounds.

At the same time of this galactic slugfest, a small film entitled *Vision Quest* was playing in American movie houses, a tale of an awkward high school wrestler seeking to notch the unlikeliest of athletic triumphs. When the wrestler downplays his moment of truth as a "lousy six minutes on the mat," a wise, old friend is quick to set him straight.

"It ain't the six minutes," he explains to the wrestler at the film's focal point. "It's what *happens* in that six minutes."

In this case, the quality of the 7 minutes 52 seconds known as Hagler-Hearns far exceeded the 60 minutes of Super Bowl XIX that year (San Francisco 38, Miami 16), or the 300 minutes of the '85 Stanley Cup Finals (Edmonton 4, Philadelphia 1). The athletic struggle within the confines of the roped square was unparalleled by anything we'd seen in years, showing all sports fanatics why no fighter ever "played" boxing.

Last October, Curt Schilling hurled the Boston Red Sox to a 2004 World Series triumph, hobbling upon the pitcher's mound in a bloodstained sock, overcoming ankle surgery to deliver the city's first baseball championship in 86 years. For weeks, words like "hero" and "warrior" followed him everywhere in his path. But baseball players are not warriors, as Schilling would later explain, urging others to "focus on the real warriors, those fighting for us in Iraq and Afghanistan."

Even so, anybody who witnessed what happened when they put a Detroit "Hit Man" in the same ring as a blue-collar brawler from Brockton, Massachusetts, would suggest that some athletes could be called warriors. Each was willing to throw personal safety aside for a night for a cause he passionately believed in.

Ultimately, Hagler-Hearns reminded us once again that men could indeed wage war with their padded fists and that uncompromising battles can indeed be fought on canvassed floors. Of course, some of the most riveting fistic combat to ever take place has been fought in small clubs, before crowds the size of street gatherings. But the fact that this one commenced on such a grand stage made it all the more spectacular.

Sports fans can still recall where they were the moment the ball trickled through Bill Buckner's legs, when Dwight Clark pulled down "The Catch," or when the seconds ticked away on the Soviet Olympic hockey team in 1980. In just the same way, all fight fans can recall the waning hours of April 15, 1985, when their hearts almost thumped through their chests as they watched the

Heavy-hitting Hearns drilled Hagler with every punch in his arsenal, but still ended up flat on his back after absorbing several flush rights to the head in the third round. It was a fittingly violent end to one of the most brutal fights of all-time.

ruthless fury that we know today as the greatest three rounds in boxing history.

It was a sporting event that was dangerously close to becoming a news story, as the violence that erupted in that squared circle hardly seemed legal. Then again, this era was a glorious one for enthusiasts of this often troubled game. It was a time when a quartet of boxing purists didn't allow politics or managers or network contracts to get in the way of their quests for glory and nobility. To Hagler, Hearns, and a couple of peers named Ray Leonard and Roberto Duran, "risk" was nothing but a board game. Only one could be the best of the best, and each was willing to risk all in order to obtain it.

All four legends squared off with one another over the course of the decade, sometimes more than once, to concoct perhaps the preeminent series of middleweight (or thereabouts) fights of all-time. If Hagler's 1987 showdown with Leonard was its centerpiece, then Hagler-Hearns was certainly the brightest gem of this collection of treasures.

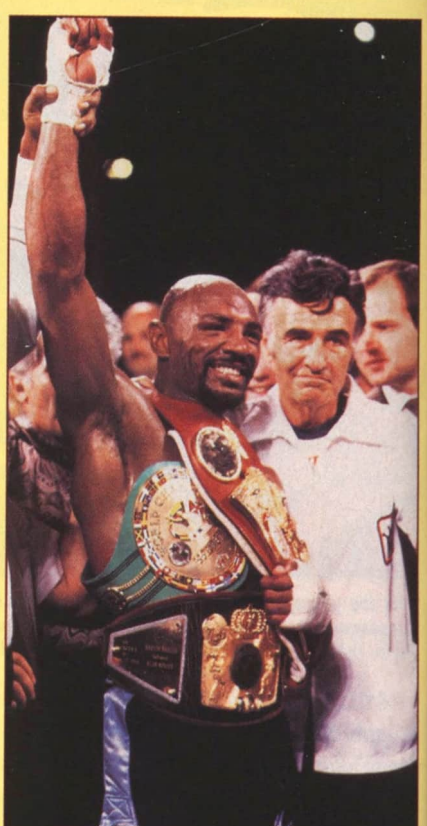
That mystical spring night in '85 serves as a constant reminder that this sport is like none other. Aside from its theatrics, its color, and its hype, we were reminded that boxing could be downright intoxicating in its most basic, primitive form.

Such a riveting affair can hook even the most casual observers into becoming lifelong enthusiasts. The crackle of leather snapping in your ears, the adrenaline pumping through your veins, it's not unlike the buzz that you can get through a pipe or a needle—and no less addictive.

Marvin Hagler and Thomas Hearns provided us with the ultimate rush. For what happened that night at Caesars Palace is something that is supposed to occur only between nations. But sometimes wars can exist between men, too, and the fistic fury compacted into slightly less than eight Las Vegas minutes will forever serve as proof.

Somewhere, Hagler's famous cap, now old and worn, is safely crammed away, collecting the dust of two decades past. But those three simple letters embedded in it will continue to epitomize our fixation with this trade. ■

Ted Bodenrader is the co-host of **New England Ringside Boxing Radio Show** *on WWZN, Boston, and a regular contributor to this magazine.*



When "The Fight" was over, Hagler had a third-round kayo victory and all the middleweight belts, but both men had covered themselves in glory. It was the kind of fight that will never be forgotten by those who saw it, and now it belongs to the ages.

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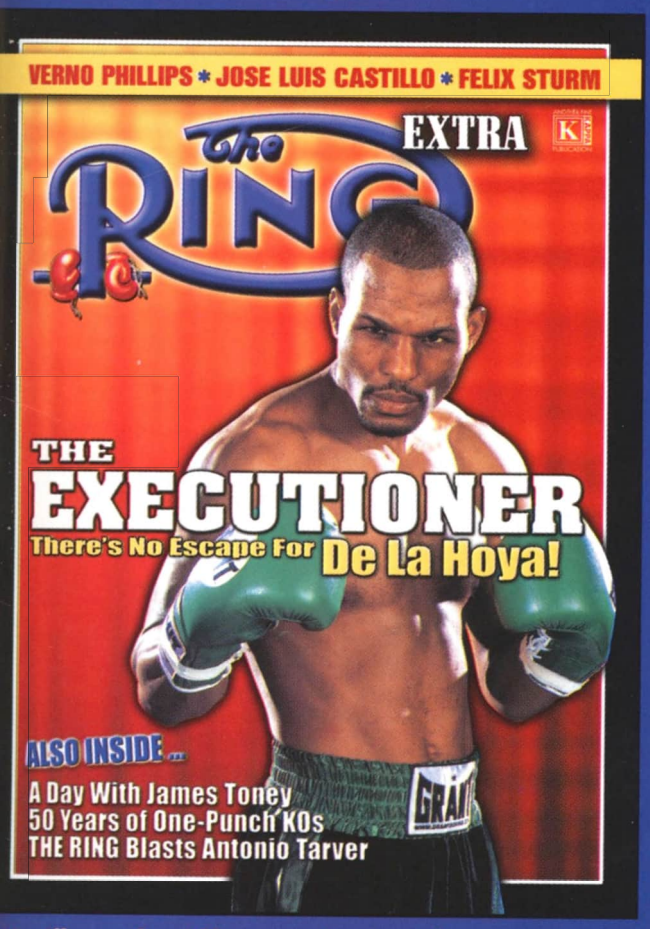

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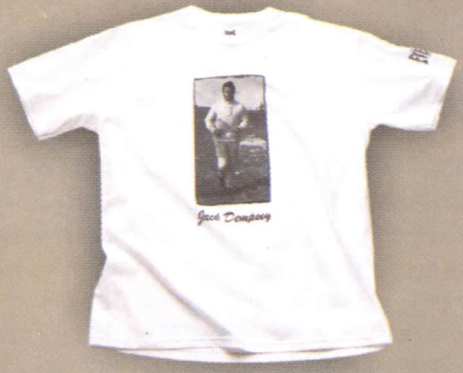

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